

Teaching Below Grade-Level Readers in an Urban School in the Absence of Best Practices:

Teachers' and Students' Perspectives

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
(Curriculum and Practice)
at the University of Michigan-Dearborn
2017

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my mom- my first teacher and to all of the struggling readers that I have worked with during the past ten years. These children have taught me about perseverance and have inspired me more than they will ever know--especially my own struggling reader-- thank you sweetheart.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank my committee chair, Dr. Martha Adler for her support and direction throughout this long journey. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Jamie Lee and Dr. Dara Hill for your direction and support. There are so many professors at U of M-Dearborn that have assisted me along this journey. Thank you for never giving up on me.

I could not have made it through this journey without Tina. Thank you so much for being the one person who understood the struggles, who listened to me, helped me revise, and supported me as a friend and colleague. Crystal it was through this journey that I met you and I am so blessed to have you in my life. Myron, Cathy, and Laurie – there are no words to express my gratitude and appreciation for all of your support during the last part of this journey.

Finally, but most importantly I would like to recognize and thank my family for all of your support, encouragement, hugs, and understanding while on this journey. My wonderful husband Scott, thank you for all of your support, pep talks, flowers, and hugs. You are my rock and my best friend. Thank you for being you. Thank you to Brandon and Justin for understanding when I had to stay home and miss swim and track meets to complete class work. Also, thank you for inspiring me every day to be better than I was the day before. Always remember:

“You’re braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.” -A. A. Milne

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Abstract

This study explored teacher--student discourse that occurred during the English Language Arts/Reading-Vocabulary block in order to understand the connection between self-efficacy, motivation, and attitudes of the below-grade level readers in an urban school. The participants for this study were ten second and third grade below grade-level readers and three classroom teachers in a low SES, Midwestern school. Data were collected from participant observations that were video recorded and analyzed using conversational analysis focusing on turn taking (dyadic and multiparty) and the use of questions during reading instruction. Interview and survey data were collected from the students. Interview data were collected from the three teachers. This study found that the discourse taking place during reading instruction did not support best practices for literacy instruction, the teachers perceived the below grade-level teachers differently than the higher readers, the students perceived themselves as good readers despite their low reading levels, and administration did not have literacy supports in place for the teachers or the below grade-level readers. Implications for future research include discourse during small group reading instruction including discourse to promote, influence and guide students in reading; the impact that teacher self-efficacy and student self-efficacy on student achievement; and a study in reading instruction that includes teachers, reading interventionists, and administration to gain a picture of the culture of literacy within high-poverty, low achieving schools.

Keywords: literacy instruction, best practices, teacher self-efficacy, student self-efficacy, discourse, administrative support

Chapter 1: Introduction

As a reading specialist, I have worked with students who are two to three grade levels behind in reading. I work in small groups and focus instruction towards the students' needs. I provide instruction at the students' instructional levels with materials that are at their interest levels. Most of my experiences have been with urban children: mostly African American and Hispanic. In one urban school, I had two students, a male and a female, both in the seventh grade who worked with me in the same reading group. These students were African American and both were from single parent, low socio-economic status homes. They were shy and nervous about reading aloud in front of anyone, including me. These students felt inadequate in the area of reading and truly believed that they could not read well as they would say to me, "I can't read good." I focused instruction on fluency as they were both reading at a fourth grade level. I was hoping that increasing their fluency would boost their sense of self-efficacy as well. During our time together, we worked on reading with feeling, giving the characters in the stories a voice, paying attention to the punctuation, and using prosody as we read. As time progressed, these two students began to open up to my instruction, flourish as readers, and gain missing skills bringing their reading up to grade level. It was exciting to see these two become more confident in themselves as students and learners. The girl obtained the recognition of being on the Principal's List for straight A's for the first time in her educational career. I will never forget a

one of our last meetings, she looked at me and said, “I’m not afraid anymore Mrs. Larkins. I can read and do it well.”

Helping my students gain confidence, raise their self-efficacy, and become readers is one of the greatest joys I have as a teacher. One of my students, a third grade boy, was unmotivated and possessed a negative attitude towards reading. When he began working with me, he was very unhappy, a behavior problem, and he read in a monotone voice similar to a robot. We met together in a small group of students focusing on fluency and using expression while reading. After some time, he began to make some significant gains, eventually moving up three grade levels by year’s end. When he returned to school in the fall of his fourth grade year, he did so with a new outlook towards reading. He was excited, more confident, and could not wait to tell anyone he encountered “reading is my favorite subject.”

Students in the elementary setting spend the majority of their school day reading across the core content areas. When students are frustrated in reading, the frustration can reflect in grades earned in core subjects, the demeanor presented in the classroom, as well as the behavior that is exhibited throughout the school day. Struggling readers often believe that they cannot read, are too “stupid” to be able to read, or just do not have what it takes to be a reader.

The frustration that I am presented with as a reading specialist is that many of my students truly believe that they “can’t” read, when in actuality they can read but not at grade level. When these struggling readers cross through the doorway into my room, the word “can’t” is not allowed, they know that they have to try; they know that whether there is two of us or four of us--we are a team; and, finally they know that I hold them to high expectations.

One year when I was teaching, a fellow educator came up to me and asked why her second grade student did not read for her the way he read for me in our small group. My response to her was simple--he knows that with me he is safe in making mistakes, students know that we treat mistakes as a chance to learn, and he also knows that he can read with me even if it is not at grade level. I truly felt that my student was not expected to perform in the classroom because he was an active, African American, second grade boy who had already been characterized as a troubled boy; he was already being set up for failure and less was being expected of him within his classroom. All children regardless of their life circumstances have the abilities to achieve grade level and above literacy. Teachers need to recognize that students within a classroom understand the expectations that have been set for them and how the expectations for classmates may differ based upon their race or socioeconomic status. The expectations that students will read and can read is one that teachers should hold for their students. Students can read; what is critical is whether they can read at grade level.

The Problem: Race, Poverty, and Reading Achievement

Reading is a challenge for many students as it is “intertwined with many other developmental accomplishments: attention, memory, language and motivation” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 15). Many children in our society struggle with even gaining the understanding of how the alphabetic principle works, i.e., how the sounds and letters of the alphabet make words (Snow et al., 1998). The children who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, from urban areas, and who speak non-standard varieties of English are at a greater risk of struggling in reading (Snow et al., 1998).

Students from low-income households in the United States are typically African American, Latino, or Native American, speak a language other than Standardized English in the home, and/or come from poor working class families (Au & Raphael, 2000). African American students are “three times as likely to live in poverty, Native American families are twice as likely” (Au & Raphael, 2000, p. 174) when compared to Caucasian students. Since reading is considered a foundational skill regardless of the students’ backgrounds or socio-economic status, they need to be able to read in order to succeed in school (Petscher, 2010; National Association for the Education of Young Children and the International Reading Association, 1998). In order for students to become successful adults, reading is an essential skill (Snow et al., 1998).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics’ *The Condition of Education 2016* report, there were approximately 10.7 million children aged 5-17 years old who were living in poverty in 2014 (Kena et al., 2016). In 2015, the number of students aged 0-17 living in poverty in Michigan was 486,000, which decreased from 493,000 in 2014 (Kena et al., 2016). Students who come from low socio-economic status tend to perform lower than average in kindergarten and their struggling academic performance typically extends through elementary and high school (Kena et al., 2015). Nearly 53 percent of Michigan’s children never participate in nursery school, preschool, or even kindergarten prior to starting school (Kids Count in Michigan, 2016). It is in early childhood where 90 percent of a child’s brain is developed and the “intellectual and emotional hardwiring is set for life” (Kids Count in Michigan, 2010, p. 1). The lack of prior exposure to academics and reading is setting students up to already be behind their peers when arriving at school either in kindergarten or in first grade (Kids Count in Michigan, 2010). Children from lower socio-economic status also tend to struggle in reading more than students from middle to upper-income families, which can also be due to the activities

students participate in after school, to the lack of academic support at home, along with poor attendance due to health or transportation issues (Buckingham, Wheldall, & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013).

Early literacy exposure is important to the long-term success of and child's reading experience (Zehnder-Merrell, 2015). In 2013 there were approximately 40,000 third graders in Michigan who did not demonstrate proficiency in reading on the Michigan Educational Assessment Plan (MEAP), while the fourth graders proficiency dropped from 40 percent to 32 percent from 2008 to 2012 on the same assessment (Zehnder-Merrell, 2013; Zehnder-Merrell, 2015). Additionally, exposing students to literature is especially important in low socio-economic areas as these students generally have less contact with books (Snow et al., 1998). Unfortunately, students who come from low-income areas have not had the same exposure to literature as those students in high socio-economic areas (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008; National Association for the Education of Young Children and the International Reading Association, 1998; Snow et al., 1998).

Pedagogy of poverty. There are teachers of African American students in poor urban settings who believe these students are unable to learn (Ford & Quinn, 2010; Haberman, 1991). According to Haberman (1991) a pedagogy of poverty exists and has been accepted as the norm in urban schools. It is "not merely what teachers do and what youngsters expect, but for different reasons, what parents, the community and the general public assume teaching to be" (Haberman, 1991, p.291). In the "Pedagogy of Poverty" Haberman (1991) presented four components as core (a) "Teaching is what teachers do. Learning is what students do" (p. 291); (b) When students are in school, it is the teacher that is in charge and the students should conform to the behavior the teacher desires; (c) Ranking students is something that occurs in

school and cannot be avoided; there will be some students at the top and some at the bottom; (d) Schooling is needed so students can learn basic skills, nothing more nothing less; “directive pedagogy must be used to ensure that youngsters are compelled to learn their basic skills” (p. 291). Haberman (1991) states that the pedagogy is not based on theory or by the best practices of teachers within the classroom; however, it is what he deemed a “ritualistic act” (p. 292) that does not foster learning but is concerned more with the teacher/student relationships within the school. It is in the pedagogy of poverty that teachers seem to be in control of the classroom through their directive instruction; however, according to Haberman (1991), the students wish to maintain the pedagogy as “it absolves them of responsibility for learning and put the burden on the teachers” (p. 292). In high--poverty schools, the struggle to read coupled with socio-economic status of the population can cause the teachers to have low expectations about their students’ reading achievement (Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005). Haberman (1991) and others (Ullucci & Howard, 2015) argue that teachers should set higher expectations for students in urban school(s) by incorporating critical thinking, creativity, along with problem solving into everyday instruction. It is essential for teachers to push students to think critically about learning and what is happening in the world (Delpit, 2006). The pedagogy should not be accepted; students should be challenged by involving them in the learning process, creating a community, providing students with real-life experiences, and helping students created responses where reflection can take place (Haberman 1991). Haberman (1991) stated it simply and poignantly, “we act as if it is not the pedagogy that must be fitted to the students but the students who must accept the untouchable method” (p. 292). Haberman (2010) revisited his original “Pedagogy of Poverty” (1991) by stating that the pedagogy he described 20 years ago is still used in classrooms today as “directive, mind-numbing, mundane, useless, anti-intellectual acts that

constitute teaching” (Haberman, 2010, p. 45). Haberman (2010) predicted that unless this pedagogy changes the future of education will include (a) no difference between the theory of learning and what teachers do; (b) no difference in how different subjects are taught; (c) professional development that does not change instruction as the pedagogy of poverty is not changing or disappearing in our urban schools; and, (d) teachers in urban settings who will continue to complain about classroom management and the “lack of motivation for learning” (p. 45) unless their approach to teaching changes.

Low-income children of color are not achieving in reading across the nation and the achievement gap for these students continues to grow (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Urban schools continue to see their students fall further and further behind other students in suburban schools, which is increasing the achievement gap. In Michigan, there were approximately 700,000 students enrolled in schools in the 2012-2013 school year (Flores, 2014). Of those 700,000 students, roughly 120,000 of them were African-American and nearly 63,000 of those students were found in the bottom 30% of the readers in the state (Flores, 2014). As early as third grade, students are falling behind their peers in reading according to the state’s standardized assessment where in 2012 approximately 54% of the African-American students tested scored as either partially proficient or not proficient on the state assessment; in 2013 this number rose to approximately 63% (*MI School Data Dashboard & Accountability Scorecard*, 2015).

As I began this study, I wondered what was creating the achievement gap and why it consistently seems to increase even with the early interventions that some schools have put into place. An observation that I made while working at an urban school related to a lack of support for the teachers in the areas of reading and writing. The teachers that I have worked with in

these settings have the important job of helping some of the neediest of children learn to read; however, the teachers are not always supported throughout the year nor are they always provided with the resources needed to promote reading and writing development. Many schools offer professional development at the beginning of the year but as the year progresses the support dwindles. The lack of support for the teachers by administration ultimately affects the students. My desire was to uncover why students at such a young age already able to express that they feel they can't read? Where was this lack of self-efficacy coming from? As I began to review the literature, I searched for explanations regarding low self-efficacy, low reading ability, and how struggling readers' lack the motivation to read.

Statement of the Problem

Children of color who are from low socio-economic status who depend upon urban schools are at risk for being successful in reading. Studies have been completed on high-poverty, high-performing schools (Adler, 2002a, 2002b; Adler & Fisher, 2001); however, research on low performing schools with high populations of children of color are outdated (Anyon, 1980; Haberman, 1991, 2010). This study examines a high-poverty, low performing urban school.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The focus of the literature reviewed includes self-efficacy, motivation, reading achievement, feedback, classroom discourse, and teacher expectations in an effort to explore the problem of students who struggle academically in reading, increasing the achievement gap. In particular, a guiding question for this literature focused on teachers' expectations and how the expectations affect struggling readers' attitudes and motivation for reading. The literature review is theoretically grounded in the work of Bandura (1977, 1993) including self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and the relationships between attitudes, expectations, and reading. Bandura's (1993) theory of self-efficacy is relevant to this study as it is "primarily concerned with activation and persistence of behavior" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). The topics covered in this review are: self-efficacy and student achievement, culturally relevant teaching, best practices in teaching reading, teacher expectations and attitudes and the impact on student motivation to learn, student engagement, motivation, and achievement in reading, and finally communication, language, and discourse.

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory as a Framework

Self-efficacy is the confidence that a student has in his/her ability to complete a task or solve a problem (Brophy, 1987; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Bandura (1977) stated that efficacy expectations are convictions "that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcome" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). According to Bandura (1993), self-efficacy is based o

cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes. The cognitive area of self-efficacy drives personal goal setting, how students behave within the classroom setting, and the ability to understand that mistakes help in the learning process (Bandura, 1977, 1993). The motivational processes of self-efficacy guide a person's actions, helping to set goals, and form beliefs about what can or cannot be accomplished (Bandura, 1993). The affective processes of self-efficacy relate to the amount of stress and possible depression a student may encounter during the learning process (Bandura, 1993). The affective processes can create the anxiety and depression that many students encounter during the learning process (Bandura, 1993; (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). The selection processes of self-efficacy pertain to the choices that students make in the course of their lives (Bandura, 1993). The decisions that are made to participate in activities or avoid activities help to "cultivate different competencies, interests, and social networks that determine life courses" (Bandura, 1993, p. 135). It is through the selection process that self-efficacy affects career choices (Bandura, 1993).

Students with a low sense of self-efficacy may lack the motivation to read (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Below grade-level readers often do not set personal reading goals as they have no desire to read (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Often times it is not just the lack of desire to read that can affect motivation but also a lack of interest in the reading material being presented to the below grade-level reader (Yair, 2000).

Motivation. Motivation is grounded in three areas: "the affective reaction to one's performance, perceived self-efficacy for goal attainment, and readjustment of personal goals

based on one's progress" (Bandura, 1993, pp. 130-131). Bandura asserts that when a student has a strong sense of self-efficacy he/she is less likely to abandon a task that is difficult, but in turn is able to overcome the difficult challenge with perseverance (Bandura, 1993). It is then that the success cultivates what Bandura (1993) refers to as "proactive control" (p. 132), causing the student to set higher goals for him/herself creating even more challenges to be overcome. As a student achieves a set goal, a new personal goal is established that can continue to challenge the student; as the challenges are successfully completed, the student's motivation should in turn increase (Bandura, 1993). As students are learning to read and growing in reading, new challenges are presented to them daily. In many instances the students, especially the below grade-level readers, may choose not to participate in the act of reading due to consistent failure (Gambrell, 1996).

Motivation and reading. The choices that students make to participate in learning to read and reading to learn will affect their abilities to go to college, obtain a driver's license, obtain a job, or support their families, in general, to be able to read and function in today's society (Ford & Quinn, 2010). Bandura's (1977) work has implications in the area of motivation for readers who are successful and the effect the success has on their motivation to want to read. Bandura (1977) stated that "successes raise mastery expectations; repeated failures lower them" (p. 195). Success and failure also affect motivation; "motivation includes the actions, goals, values, and beliefs towards reading" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, as cited in Guthrie, Wigfield, & You, 2012, p. 602). Goal setting is important in self-efficacy as "self-efficacy influences the level of goal challenge people set for themselves, the amount of effort they mobilize, and their persistence in the face of difficulties" (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992, p. 664).

Intrinsic Motivation, Attitudes and Expectations

In reading, intrinsic motivation is the desire and interest to read (Guthrie et al., 2012). It drives a student to want to be a successful reader. Intrinsic motivation is led by curiosity and helps a student strive for “competence and mastery” (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 114). The intrinsically motivated reader is one who reads because he/she enjoys the act of reading but is also one who sets goals and uses strategies in reading (Applegate & Applegate, 2004).

According to Brophy (1987), the “state of motivation to learn exists when student engagement in a particular activity is guided by the intention of acquiring the knowledge of mastering the skill that the activity is designed to teach” (p. 40). The ability to respond to and set goals is a cognitive process associated with motivation (Bandura, 1977).

The foundational studies in motivation and expectations in reading can be linked to students’ attitudes toward reading. Readers’ attitudes can change over time based upon the readers’ normative beliefs, beliefs about the outcomes of the act of reading, and reading experiences (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). As students grow-up and mature, the idea of reading will be weighed against other activities; therefore, even strong readers who enjoy reading may not hold strong positive attitudes towards the act of reading when presented with alternative activities (McKenna, et al., 1995). If the act of reading is a struggle and expectations are set too high, the student will not conform as frustration will set in (McKenna et al., 1995). The factors that relate to reading and motivation (McKenna et al., 1995) are associated with attitude as “a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 6). Students’ attitudes about themselves as readers are a result of the outcome of reading; a poor reader will have a negative attitude while those thriving readers will portray a positive attitude towards reading (McKenna et al., 1995).

Self-Efficacy and Student Achievement

Self-efficacy not only affects a student's ability to read and do it well, but it impacts the teacher's ability to lead productive instruction in area of literacy (Bandura, 1977, 1993; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011; Kim & Lorschbach, 2005; Wheatley, 2002). A teacher's low self-efficacy can affect his/her instructional approach to literacy (Wheatley, 2002); he/she may feel ineffective and guilty over the lack of student achievement within his classroom (Wheatley, 2002).

Teacher factors. Teacher self-efficacy pertains to the teacher's beliefs and how those beliefs influence student outcomes in the classroom (Wheatley, 2002). According to Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2007) self-efficacy is "a motivational construct based on self-perception of competence rather than *actual* [italicized in original] level of competence" (p. 946). A teacher who has low self-efficacy is more likely to blame the students rather than his/her own teaching if the students are not understanding the concepts taught (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011; Wheatley, 2002). Teacher self-efficacy varies based upon the subject area (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011; Wheatley, 2002). If a teacher believes that he/she is strong in math, his/her self-efficacy for teaching that subject will be higher than one in which he/she has low self-efficacy. The implications are that low teacher self-efficacy can in turn affect how students feel and approach a content area as well, as low teacher self-efficacy has been shown to lower student outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Antecedents of teacher self-efficacy pertaining to literacy instruction and the relationships to teaching were the focus in the study by Tschannen-Moran and Johnson (2011). Using the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES), they examined how a teacher's self-efficacy may impact the students' engagement and classroom management, along with the teacher's instructional strategies. Analyzing teacher self-

efficacy, verbal persuasion, experiences, the teaching task, and the context of the tasks the study revealed that the length of teaching experience did not impact self-efficacy beliefs but teacher preparation programs and professional development did impact self-efficacy in the area of children's literacy instruction (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Self-efficacy was impacted by the task and the context of the task if the appropriate resources were not available to the teachers for literacy instruction (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Overall, when a teacher had a stronger sense of self-efficacy, the teacher was more capable of providing instructional strategies that kept students engaged and classroom management under control. In another study, Johnson (2010) discovered that the better prepared pre-service teachers and novice teachers were with literacy instruction, the more confident they were, and in turn they believed that they made a greater impact on the students in the classroom.

Student factors. If a student knows he/she is a below grade-level reader, the desire and motivation to read will be lower than that of a successful reader (Schunk, 2003). Students with lower self-efficacy are also the ones who tend to be more easily distracted, wander around the room, exhibit avoidance behaviors, and talk more often (Kim & Lorschbach, 2005). A lower sense of self-efficacy can cause students to act out more in the classroom setting (Bandura, 1993).

Student self-efficacy studies done with older learners have shown that it is a factor in reading and are useful to consider for this study since below grade-level reading starts long before students read the higher grades. The impact of self-efficacy was the focus of Shell, Bruning, & Colvin's (1995) study of students' reading development through high school by analyzing students in fourth, seventh, and tenth grade and the impact that student achievement might have on student development. Their results indicate that self-efficacy in students develop as they progress through school in that they are capable of reading and communicating in various

genres however that they are not as capable in completing specific reading and writing skills (Shell et al., 1995).

Colvin and Schlosser (1997) examined efficacious and less efficacious students in middle school and how the literacy behaviors affected their academic success. Efficacious students were described with the following behaviors: those who took risks in reading and writing, thought of reading and writing as a meaningful process, did not accept failure in the areas of reading and writing, and had a social group that provided them with feedback and assistance (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997); these are the students who are more engaged and thus are intrinsically motivated to read (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). The less efficacious students were described as those who anticipated failure in reading and writing, were isolated in the classroom, did not complete tasks related to reading and writing, and did not think that the practice of reading and writing was meaningful (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997).

Colvin and Schlosser (1997) determined that teachers have substantial influence on the students within their classrooms. Through feedback provided by teachers, students can clarify expectations set for them (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997). The aforementioned feedback can be provided through non-verbal messages in annotations on papers, the tone of the voice used while speaking to the students, the facial expressions, as well as through praise that is offered to the students; the differences in feedback distinguishes the more successful students from those who are less successful (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997).

According to Colvin and Schlosser (1997), teachers can significantly influence their students' behaviors by adopting a believing attitude within the classroom; "teachers *must believe* [italicized in original] that students can be competent and capable literacy learners" (p. 278). When teachers do not believe in their students it is hard for the students to believe in themselves;

“they [students] knew when teachers assumed they would be unable to accomplish academic tasks” (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997).

Culturally Relevant Teaching

The term “culturally relevant teaching” is a pedagogical approach to teaching that “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20). This approach to teaching is important due to the diversity of the student populations in our schools today. Diversity amongst students is not limited to culture but also includes ethnicity, race, and language (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

In 1992, Ladson-Billings examined the disparity of reading abilities among students from different ethnicities in an attempt to determine the proper way to teach ethnically diverse students how to read. What Ladson-Billings (1992) uncovered in this study was that it is not just what is taught to students from different ethnicities and races, but how the educator makes it relevant to the student(s) in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

In her examination of culturally relevant teaching, Ladson-Billings (1992) spent time with two teachers identified by parents and administrators as effective teachers of African American students: one with 14 years of experience taking a whole-language approach and the other with less experience taking a phonics approach. Both of these teachers used pedagogical methods that were entirely different from each other yet both were successful. Ladson-Billings (1992) discovered several key items occurring in both classrooms: culturally relevant texts, treating students as a community, sharing joy and successes, sharing praise and respect among teachers and students as well as students and students. Both teachers approached their craft as an

art and not a skill, building connected relationships with the students (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Neither of these teachers assumed that their students were inadequate and not prepared to learn in the classroom due to socioeconomic status, different cultural background, or spoke different languages (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Teacher success in these cases derives from just good teaching, raising the expectations of the students with the classroom, and giving them the care and attention that they need to become successful students and readers.

Within urban schools or schools where the population is diverse, there is a “generalized belief that they [students] cannot learn as well as those in power--the upper/middle class” (Purcell-Gates, 2008, p. 135). Ladson-Billings (2009) asked a group of students in an inner-city middle school about the curriculum in one of their classes. A student responded to Ladson-Billings (2009) stating that they were learning about the Constitution. When Ladson-Billings (2009) replied that the topic did not sound exciting, the students responded by saying it was not the topic it was the teacher in the room; she listened to them, respected them, let them express their ideas, and most of all she acknowledged them outside of the classroom. Culturally relevant and aware teachers “believe that the students have to care, not only about themselves but also about their classmates’ achievement” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 74).

Culturally relevant pedagogy was also reviewed by Au and Raphael (2000) and the findings were similar to Ladson-Billings (1992) examining the link between literacy, learning, instructional techniques, and socio-economic status of students in Hawaii. Au and Raphael (2000) looked at the gap that exists due to the diversity of the student population within the schools. Their findings included gaps that were not only due to the lack of skills but also due to the students’ lack of resources outside of school (Au & Raphael, 2000). Connections between the student’s socio-economic status and exposure to literacy practices such as being read to or

having books available in the home at a young age influence the skills he/she comes to school with as well as a perceived feeling of being behind his/her peers (Au & Raphael, 2000; Auwarter, 2008; Hughes & Kwok, 2007).

Best practices in teaching reading. Best practices in teaching refer to instructional strategies and techniques that are used to improve students' abilities to read (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011; O'Connor, Fulmer, Harty, & Bell, 2006; Roskos & Newman, 2014). While there is no one way to teach reading there are important components that need to be included in reading instruction (International Literacy Association, 1999; O'Connor et al., 2006; Snow et al., 1998). The essential components include developing motivation to read, strategies to help students construct meaning while reading, background information and vocabulary, fluent reading, ability to decode words, and being able to understand the connection between phonemes and their connection to print (Adler & Fisher, 2001; International Literacy Association, 1999; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011). Teachers also need to include "explicit instruction" (Cunningham, Zibulsky, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2009) to teach phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension to students within their classrooms (O'Connor et al., 2006). Learning to read is not an easy process and it "must be dynamically supported by an interaction of text reading and good teaching" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 9).

To increase below grade-level readers' abilities to read, teachers need to balance the instruction between what the students know and what they need to become successful in reading and in academics (Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Collins Block, & Mandel Morrow, 2001). First and foremost, instruction should include opportunities to read combined with the student's choice of literature (Pressley et al., 2001; Robb, 2013). These opportunities should include both narrative and non-fiction texts in the forms of books, magazines, and even E-books

if possible (Daniels & Bizar, 2005). Students need to know that it is not always what they read that is important instead that they need to read daily to practice and work toward reading in everyday (Cunningham, 2006; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011) and not just while at school. Prior to reading, teachers should build background knowledge for their students, setting the purpose for the reading, providing the students with important vocabulary--helping them define the words in context, and allow them to make predictions prior to reading (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011).

While students are reading, teachers need to assist students in developing their abilities to think-as-readers--developing their metacognition (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011), using skills such as visualizing, making connections, questioning the text, making inferences, making judgments about the reading, analyzing the material, monitoring for errors while reading, and finally being able to retell or summarize what they have read (Daniels & Bizar, 2005; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011; Pressley et al., 2001).

Teaching reading in the primary grades. Guided reading within the primary grades is an effective method of teaching reading to the emergent and beginning reader (McCormick Calkins, 2001). This method of teaching reading addresses the students' needs through the use of flexible grouping along with meeting each child at his/her instructional level through the use of grade- appropriate texts (Adler, 2002; Adler & Fisher, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 2013).

Additional instructional strategies that represent best practices include working in small learning groups where the teacher can work on specific skills with the students (Adler & Fisher, 2001), providing an interactive read-aloud, independent reading, providing conversations around the readings, as well as assessments to help the teacher gauge instruction (Daniels & Bizar, 2005; Fountas & Pinnell, 2013; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011).

Assessment is a component of best practices as well (Adler, 2002; Adler & Fisher, 2001; Cunningham, 2006; Fountas & Pinnell, 2013; O'Connor et al., 2006). The use of continued student assessments in reading to assist the teachers in their instruction should be taking place (Adler & Fisher, 2001) on a regular basis. The on-going assessments allows students to move up in reading levels as they are ready (Adler & Fisher, 2001). Teachers should be analyzing the assessment data and then planning instruction accordingly to meet the needs of all of the students in the room (Cunningham, 2006). The assessments should be used to assist students in making independent reading selections as well as instructional reading selections to be utilized during small group reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2013). For example, the use of running records or informal reading inventories can assist teachers and administration in addressing any possible concerns for below grade-level readers (Adler & Fisher, 2001; Adler, 2002; Cunningham, 2006) as well as being able to challenge those students who are excelling in reading.

Teacher preparation and knowledge of best practices. Teachers should be prepared and possess knowledge of the best practices in reading prior to entering early elementary classrooms (Snow et al., 1998). The need to inform teachers about the best practices in teaching reading is a critical component of what pre-service teachers learn during their teacher preparation programs (Podhajski, Mather, Nathan, & Sammons, 2009). Pre-service teachers need to have a foundation in “theory and research-based concepts” (Podhajski et al., 2009, p. 405) around the literacy development of children. Literacy development in children is complex and needs to be understood by teachers in order to effectively teach reading and writing (Podhajski et al., 2009). Unfortunately, many institutions are not adequately preparing pre-service teachers to teach reading or English language arts in an elementary school (Joshi, Binks, Hougen, Dahlgren, Ocker-Dean, & Smith, 2009; Pressley et al., 2011).

According to Pressley et al. (2001), possessing a four-year degree does not necessarily mean that a teacher is prepared to teach reading in the classroom. A teacher learns the most from actually being immersed in situations and the “practice of the profession” (Pressley et al., 2001, p. 220) with knowledgeable mentors (Podhajski et al., 2009). Along with immersion in the classroom continuing professional development is essential for teachers in literacy instruction (Podhajski et al., 2009). Continuing professional development should be embraced by teachers as they should be teacher-learners striving to be excellent teachers preparing students to be excellent readers (Cunningham, 2006; Snow et al., 1998). Professional development should be encouraged and provided to the teachers by the administration of the school (Adler, 2002; Adler & Fisher, 2001; Cunningham, 2006). It is through professional development that teachers’ knowledge of literacy skills and strategies in reading are strengthened and new teaching practices are learned (Snow et al., 1998). Professional development also provides opportunities for the classroom teacher to be rejuvenated and reflective of his/her own practices. Professional development is part of continuing education for teachers and should be an essential occurrence in school districts as they reinvest in their teachers’ educations (Snow et al., 1998).

Teacher Expectations and Attitudes and the Impact on Student Motivation to Learn

The attitudes and expectations that teachers exhibit towards students in the classroom can impact the students’ motivation academically (McKown & Weinstein, 2008; Payne, 1994). Positive support leads to an enthusiasm and enjoyment for learning which is what any student, regardless of socio-economic status (SES) needs in their daily educational experiences (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Students should feel a positive connection with the teachers in the classroom as negative connections can create resistance from the student both emotionally and academically (Payne, 1994).

Expectations for student achievement. Students within our schools come with different backgrounds and cultures (Ladson-Billings, 1992) than their teachers, which can affect teacher expectations for student achievement to vary. These differences and experiences are “culturally driven” (Purcell-Gates, 2008, p. 128) and as literacy is a cultural practice then literacy should be woven into our students’ academic lives and held to the same expectations as all students in the classroom (Purcell-Gates, 2008). Students from low SES homes are held to lower expectations due to their linguistic differences as “language use contributes more to general teacher expectations” (Godley, Sweetland, Wheeler, Minnici, & Carpenter, 2006, p. 31). Children in schools who “are found to be disadvantaged may not be accurately perceived” (Cazden et al., 1972, p. xx).

However, expectations teachers hold for students of low socioeconomic status are not comparable for students from higher socio-economic status (Ford & Quinn, 2010; McKown & Weinstein, 2008). Students who come from a higher SES are typically judged more “favorably than are similarly performing children from lower SES backgrounds” (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008). Teachers working with students from low SES form preconceived notions about these students, believing that the students will not be able to achieve and therefore begin to feel that as educators they are ineffective (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008).

Teachers tend to hold different standards and expectations for students who differ based on race and socio-economic backgrounds (Ford & Quinn, 2010; McKown & Weinstein, 2008). Lower expectations lead to differing perceptions about what students can accomplish within the confines of the classroom setting. Ford and Quinn (2010) suggested that teachers may think that students from low socio-economic status are lazy, unreachable, unmotivated, and are behavior problems. Consequently, teachers may believe these students are incapable of learning --

emphasizing the students' deficits as well as reducing the amount of responsibility that the teachers accept for educating the students (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004). Echoing Haberman (1991), students from poverty were found to be judged by their teachers the most and are expected to perform below standard in the classroom (Au & Raphael, 2000; Caldwell & Ginther, 1996). Expectations based upon a student's social class (Harvey & Slatin, 1975; Diamond et al., 2004) set the student up for failure.

Jussim (1989) analyzed teacher expectations and self-fulfilling prophecies in a study of students' talents, efforts, and performance in mathematics. Jussim (1989) questioned the students on their beliefs and perceptions of math, their efforts, and abilities to complete homework. It was Jussim's (1989) hypothesis that "self-fulfilling prophecies, perceptual biases, and accuracy" (p. 470) may determine the relations between the expectations that teachers hold for students and the students' level of achievement. According to Jussim (1989), if teachers perceived students to be high performing, the expectations then held for those students increased. As the teachers' expectations rose, the students' self-efficacy increased and the desired levels of achievement increased (Jussim, 1989). Jussim's (1989) findings support Bandura's (1993) theory regarding students' motivational self-efficacy. As students' self-concepts increased, the motivation to achieve should increase as well. Motivation is connected to the reaction a student has to his/her performance, the ability to obtain goals that are set, and adjusting the goals that he/she did not attain (Bandura, 1993). In other words, as a student receives information alerting him/her to the attainment of a goal, the self-efficacy of that student should rise thus increasing the motivation pertaining to the task. Not only did the teachers' perceptions affect these students, but they also influenced how the teachers responded to the students within the classroom. The students held to higher expectations also received positive feedback, which

continued to influence students' self-concept and their self-efficacies, similarly to Payne's (1994) findings.

Both Jussim's (1989) and Payne's (1994) studies were noteworthy in that they provided evidence of teachers' attitudes having an impact on students' willingness, self-efficacy, and desire to achieve. Jussim (1989) concentrated on math achievement in a middle- to upper-socio-economic district with Caucasian students, while Payne (1994) focused on general achievement in a lower socio-economic district with African American students. These studies were conducted differently but discovered that teachers' attitudes can impact students' willingness, self-efficacy, and desire to achieve.

The concepts of teacher expectations, self-fulfilling prophecies, and student outcomes persist today (Jussim & Harber, 2005). In their review of 35 years of research literature, Jussim and Harber (2005) noted that teacher expectations influence students and their motivation in the classroom. It is not that the self-fulfilling prophecies are correct but that the expectations held by the teachers were more accurate when referring to student achievement (Jussim & Harber, 2005). Jussim and Harber (2005) suggest that further research needs to be completed relating to how the school community, parents, teachers, and students works together to promote self-efficacy.

Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang (2005) examined teacher perceptions of the teacher-student relationship and the impact the relationships have on academic achievement in reading and math, in first grade classrooms. Their study differs from Jussim and Harber's (2005) in that their analysis included minority groups in their study of teacher-student relationships as well as the teacher-parent relationship. Implications of negative perceptions as related to the students' ethnicity and teacher perception of the students' abilities were uncovered. Hughes et al. (2005) stated that it is "most likely that teachers' perceptions of children's abilities and relationships

processes influence each other in a reciprocal fashion” (p. 317). Teachers who show a love and enjoyment of reading in the classroom are more likely to foster and cultivate the same enthusiasm for literacy in their students (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). This enthusiasm for literacy and learning then transpires into a positive learning environment where teachers focus on student strengths thus helping to build students’ desire to learn and the willingness to take risks (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997; Stronge, Ward, Tucker, & Hindman, 2007).

Tyler and Boelter (2008) researched students’ perceptions of teachers’ behaviors during class and how those perceptions impact student achievement. Tyler and Boelter’s (2008) study took place in a Southern U.S middle school with African American students. The ESA-Related Teacher Practices Subscale (as cited in Tyler and Boelter, 2003) used in this study is a component of a program entitled Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA) (Gottfredson, Birdseye, Gottfredson, & Marciniak, 1995). TESA is a training program that focuses on reducing the negative effects that low expectations may have on students within classrooms (Gottfredson et al., 1995). Implementation of the TESA program was found to be ineffective when the program was not “faithfully implemented” (Gottfredson et al., 1995, p. 9); however, the program is still utilized today, mostly in the southwest. The student engagement scale used in the study examined the emotional engagement, behavioral engagement, and cognitive engagement of the students (Tyler & Boelter, 2008).

The data that were gathered from the TESA subscales showed that the “perceptions of the teacher’s expectations . . . were predictive of the middle-grade students level of cognitive achievement” (Tyler & Boelter, 2008, p. 34) as well as the behavioral engagement and emotional engagement. Tyler and Boelter (2008) found that “teacher expectations are predictive of students’ academic achievement and academic efficacy reports” (p. 38).

Lowered expectations in the classroom. Lowering expectations in an urban setting can be reflected in a teacher's instructional approach in his/her class (Haberman, 1991). Urban teachers are seen as those who provide more direct instruction, give directions, make assignments, monitor seatwork, settle disputes, mark papers, and give grades (Haberman, 1991, 2010), which in the realm of teaching in an urban setting has been termed "the gold standard" (Haberman, 2010). Teachers who hold lower expectations for their students tend to "put forth less effort in preparation and delivery of instruction" (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007, p. 945). Anyon (1980) stated similar findings pertaining to the working class schools and Haberman's (1991) work with the pedagogy of poverty. In the working class schools "the procedure is usually mechanical, involving rote behavior and very little decision making or choice" (Anyon, 1980, p. 3). Anyon (1980) explained that investigators did not observe any classroom discussions pertaining to completing math problems, creative writing, or utilizing different punctuation in writing to give writing meaning when they were in the working class schools. Within these schools, there were no resources for the children, the "room belonged to the teacher" (Anyon, 1980, p. 5) and the teacher spoke to the students in a military fashion only giving them orders. It seems as though the teachers did not expect that their students could handle the higher order thinking questions or assignments. The goals of the teachers were to keep the students busy and to teach them the basic, whereas in the prominent schools the focus was on helping the students create learning and knowledge for themselves (Ullucci & Howard, 2015). Comber (2014) in a study completed in Australia used Haberman's (1991) work to support her theory that students of poorer backgrounds were expected to perform at lower levels of achievement. In the schools that Comber (2014) examined, the staff treated the students negatively and spoke of and highlighted their deficits. Within the schools it was also believed

that the perfect student was one that was “hard working and compliant” (Comber, 2014, p. 118). Teachers lowered the work to meet the expected needs of the students in urban and rural schools and in turn did them a disservice by discounting their abilities as learners (Ullucci & Howard, 2015).

Raising expectations through reading instruction. Children’s learning depends on the experiences that educators provide in the classroom (Jaramillo, 1996), not just by placing material in front of them and expecting learning to take place (Gambrell et al., 2011). Brophy (1991) and Jaramillo (1996) support the need for higher order thinking for strong literacy abilities, lessons that promote social interactions between student and text, and that smaller group instruction allows students to learn through social engagement. It is within these small groups that readers engage with the text as well as each other, allowing them to learn and grow by interacting with their learning environment (Gambrell, 1996; Jaramillo, 1996) as well as through the process of self-discovery (Jaramillo, 1996).

Meeting student needs. Au and Raphael (2000) determined that regardless of the students’ cultural or socio-economic level, they should be taught in their instructional levels, “within their zone of proximal development, so that they can make appropriate progress each year” (Au & Raphael, 2000, p.181) whether they are in small groups or a whole group. When teaching students reading, it is important to provide the students with material that is at their instructional level, yet still hold them to high expectations as readers (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997). By choosing text at the instructional level, “not too easy but not too hard” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2013, p. 269), the teacher is meeting the students where they are presently in achievement and can stress “a higher, possible achievable objective[s]” (Ediger, 2010, p. 94). It is through this material that the teacher can scaffold and model the reading and learning process (Jaramillo,

1996; Gambrell, 1996; Fostnot, 2005; Applefield et al., 2001). Setting goals just above where the student is currently performing, the teacher is helping the students to extend learning beyond current levels of performance (Jaramillo, 1996). When students are involved in setting goals and evaluating their own work, they tend to become invested in their academics; in this case reading and writing (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997).

Reading as a social process. In a study of “exemplary teachers,” Allington (2002) found that the key thread in the success of literacy instruction was conversation. Allington (2002) discussed how the teachers were asking questions that were not simple in form. These exemplary teachers asked open-ended questions that involved “problem-posing, problem-solving” (Allington, 2002, p. 744) such as: “So, what other story have we read that had an ending like this one?” and “Has anyone had a problem with a pet, like the boy in the story?” (pp. 744-745). Through these types of questions, the students have to think and talk which in turn leads to stronger reading comprehension (Allington, 2002). It is during the “thoughtful talk” (Allington, 2002, p. 745) where the students are able to verbally think through what they are learning and “socially negotiate meaning” (Jaramillo, 1996, p. 135) of the stories they are reading. Students come to school with their own experiences and knowledge (Jaramillo, 1996). If those experiences are limited, the construction of knowledge based upon those experiences will be limited as well (Jaramillo, 1996). To learn, “the learner must experience . . . and *socially negotiate* [original italicized] their meaning in the authentic context of a *complex learning* [original italicized] environment” (Jaramillo, 1996, p 135).

Student Engagement, Motivation, and Achievement in Reading

Student engagement stems from the desire to be involved, participate in, and be committed to an activity (Guthrie et al., 2012). The emotional engagement in an activity covers

both the positive and negative outlooks toward the activity (Guthrie et al., 2012; Unrau & Schlackman, 2006; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Students generally respond to the cues that their teachers provide through their behavior and that student performance is shaped by the way teachers act and react within the classroom (Gottfredson, Birdseye, Gottfredson, & Marciniak, 1995). Teachers' interpersonal relationships with others within the building also influence student engagement (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). When students believe that the teachers care about each other and the students, a positive environment is promoted, in turn the students' engagement grows as they feel a stronger sense of wellbeing (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011).

Guthrie et al. (2012) believe a reader's engagement is "enhanced when the contexts in which reading occurs fosters it [engagement]" (p. 602). In other words, when the act of reading is positive and produces successful outcomes, the student will be more engaged and participate more frequently in the act of reading; "successes raise efficacy and failures lower it" (Schunk, 2003, p. 161). Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) along with Unrau and Schlackman (2006) posit that a student's engagement is based on intrinsic and extrinsic factors that affect motivation to read. Whether the motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic, when students are engaged in reading, they are doing so based on their interests, the task behind the reading, or the knowledge that is gained by the text (Gambrell, 1996). The engaged reader is one who is also strategic at employing a variety of methods in decoding, regulating reading, comprehension, and monitoring (Gambrell, 1996). Baker and Wigfield (1999) stated that "children who believe they are capable of reading well and are intrinsically motivated to read report that they read more frequently" (p. 470).

Reading engagement and scaffolding. Engagement in the text and the lessons provided by the teacher affect more than just motivation when a student is reading and learning. The engagement of the student allows for more meaningful discussion with regard to the text. "It is

during rich discussion, which can take place while reading both narrative and informational text, that students acquire a critical skill--engaging in academic discourse” (Gambrell, Hughes, Calvert, Malloy, & Igo, 2011, p. 238). Through this type of discourse and engagement, the students are interacting with the text, making connections, and solidifying their understandings of the text (Gambrell et al., 2011; Guthrie, Lutz Klauda, & Ho, 2013). During the period of discourse and questioning, the teacher can further encourage the students’ engagement by asking questions, encouraging inference making, making predictions, along with expounding on the reading through elaboration (Johnson, 2004).

Engagement. “Reading is authentic, and consequently substantively engaging” (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991, p. 268) as it can answer students’ questions, open their eyes to a new idea or concept, and can also help them make connections between their own lives and the text (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). Students respond more favorably when presented with authentic lessons that provide choices for them. The choices provided to students should be reflective of real life literacy experiences such as reading for fun, to a friend, reading or writing about how to make something, or simply writing a letter to someone (Cullinan, 1992). Students need to be held to completing activities that will help them achieve success and are uniquely designed for them (Brophy, 1991). When presented with lessons that require low-level skills, students become bored and uninterested and begin to act out (Brophy, 1991).

Scaffolding and discourse. Scaffolding in the context of a classroom occurs when an adult provides support to students and enables them to complete a task (Cazden, 2001). It is through the completion of the task where the students then become more confident in the task, which in turn causes the students to work harder, become more successful, and enabling the adult to withdraw support in small bits and increments (Cazden, 2001). Scaffolding through discourse

consists of the teacher completing a portion of the lesson in “the student-teacher exchange” (Green & Gredler, 2002, p. 57) where questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting of the text all take place (Cazden, 2001). As the teacher repeats this method with students, the teacher support can slowly be withdrawn leading the students to begin to ask themselves questions as they read aloud (Cazden, 2001; Palincsar & Brown, 1984). The final goal is for the students to ask those questions silently to themselves as they read (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). By utilizing a more social, small group approach to reading such as the aforementioned, teachers can show students that “reading helps us learn more about the world in which we live, gives us pleasure and enjoyment, develops our vocabulary, and helps us become better speakers and more effective writers” (Gambrell, 1996, p. 21). Having discussions with students within the classroom setting also allow the students to feel as though they are respected and cared about as people and not just students, “it is not merely a matter of what you say but of how your language is understood and how you understand the language of your students” (Kohl, 2002, p. 147).

Communication, Language, and Discourse

Communication (Bakhtin, 1986) has a purpose in the classroom as “it is a real link in the chain of speech communication in a particular sphere of human activity or everyday life” (p. 83). Communication in the context of this review will focus on the speech events that occur but also will incorporate what Gumperz (1986) terms contextualization cues, which include not only verbal signals given to others but also, “nonverbal signals (e.g., postural configuration), and prosodic signals (e.g., intonation patterns, volume, stress patterns), as well as the manipulation of artifacts” (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 309). Gee and Green (1998) take contextualization cues even farther including the space between participants in the communication event or proxemics, “eye gaze, and kinesics (gesture, body movement, and

physical activity)” (p. 122). Taking contextualization cues and analyzing them individually would not result in any sort of meaningful communication; however, taking the cues and examining them in a social context produces “the ongoing ‘dialogue’ [original in quotations]” (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 309). The interaction involved with contextualization cues is of a social construction (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Gee & Green, 1998).

Language as a social construct. Language is a social construct that occurs between people (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993). It is seen as part of an ongoing dialogue, “as part of how people act and react to each other . . . language is seen not as meaning per se but as meaningful” (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p.309). It is through the use of language, “through how we act and react with each other through language, we are constructing ideologies and we are constructing knowledge” (Bloome & Willis, 2013, p. 65). Language is used as a means of communication either verbal or written (Heath, 1983). As Kohl (2002) discussed language, he referred to it as not merely the

level of words, sentences, paragraphs, dialects, accents and linguistic differences . . . [But also,] the social phenomenon that has complex personal implications relating to how the more formal aspects of reading, writing, and talking are interpreted on an everyday basis. (Kohl, 2002, p. 151)

Gee and Green (1998) posit that learning places the participants in a larger context beyond what is right in front of them; learning is part of what Gee and Green refer to as “communities of practice” (p. 147). No matter who belongs to these communities, whether it be elementary school children, members of a business, or college teachers--it is through these communities that the members produce and reproduce themselves through the use of daily communication and language (Gee & Green, 1998). Within these communities, social

relationships exist and revolve around communication. Reading is a form of communication connecting the participants to one another through social relationships (Bloome, 1985). The social relationships that exist are between the teacher and student, student and student, and between the text and the reader (Bloome, 1985). These social interactions occur based upon how the participants “interact with each other, by the social status they give to each other, and by who gets to do what, with whom, when, and where” (Bloome, 1985, p. 136).

Social languages. Language itself is comprised of what Bakhtin (1986) refers to as social languages. Each social language is comprised of different components of grammar that specifically reflect the social aspects of a particular group of people (Gee & Green, 1998). As Gee and Green (1989) note, it is important to remember that not all languages are “pure” but are mixed and that members of society can easily switch between two or more languages depending upon the communication need. In many languages, there is what Gee (2014) refers to as technical version as well as the vernacular version. Both are acceptable versions of language yet they are used in different contexts and signify different meanings (Gee, 2014). The technical version uses grammar that is proper and follows the rules of the language, whereas the vernacular version uses collocational patterns such as referring to a friend as “that guy” instead of using his name (Gee, 2014).

It is through language that people can “negotiate . . . interactions with the world” (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002, p. xix). The language spoken determines how others perceive who you are as a person and as a student when referring to school (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002). It is next to impossible to hear someone speak and not jump to conclusions regarding the social class of that person, where he or she lives, or their education (Delpit, 1988; Stubbs, 2002). Purcell-Gates (1997) completed an ethnographic study of a woman and her young son and their struggle with

literacy. The purpose of the study was to investigate the literacy levels of the people living in low socio-economic status in the Appalachian Mountains (Purcell-Gates, 1997). Purcell-Gates' (2008) study focused on a community that spoke a southern mountain dialect that often signified the members of that community "as 'hillbillies', 'hicks', or 'ridgerunners'" (p. 123). When a teacher in the community heard the mother of her student speak her reply was, "I *knew* [original italicized] she [Jenny] was ignorant as soon as she opened her mouth!" (Purcell-Gates, 1997, p.164). That teacher assumed that due to the way in which this mother (Jenny) spoke, she was ignorant, unable, and unwilling to learn (Purcell-Gates, 1997). Further into the study (Purcell-Gates, 1997), the woman (Jenny) remembered that at one point the teacher she had been working with told her she was illiterate, hopeless, and called her ignorant in front of all of her son's classmates; simply because she spoke differently than the other parents and students in her class. The concluding point of the study (Purcell-Gates, 1997, 2008) was not only about literacy, but also the struggles of people with low socio-economic status as well as the power related to socio-economic status and how it affects whites as well as people of color (Purcell-Gates, 2008). The languages used by students are the languages of their homes, their families, and their communities (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002) and it is the teachers' responsibilities to try to accept their students regardless of their languages, cultures, and backgrounds, allowing their culture and language to take part in the classroom (Delpit, 2002).

Discourse. The definition of discourse from Bakhtin (1986) is any utterance that is spoken. In Rex, Bunn, Davila, Dickinson, Carpenter-Ford, Gerben, McBee-Orzulak, and Thomson's (2010) review of over 300 studies in discourse analysis, discourse is defined as "instances of communication through language" (p. 95). Rex et al. (2010) state that discourse is also culturally based, reflects social positions, power, and knowledge. Gee (1989) defines

discourse in two ways: (a) Discourse (with a capital D) as the combinations of “saying (writing)-doing-valuing-believing . . . ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes” (pp. 6-7), (b) discourse (with a little d) as “connected stretches of language that make sense” (p. 6). In Gee’s (1989) definitions, Discourse can also be related to culture, whereas discourse relates back to communication. Both Discourse and discourse intersect as a person communicates with others, the language used and the action taken can be dependent upon one’s culture (Gee, 1989).

Discourse analysis. In the classroom, discourse analysis can be used to identify what should be learned by the students, what is learned, and how the discourse within the classroom impacts that learning (Gee & Green, 1998). Discourse analysis, according to Kumaravadivelu (1999) is a “study of larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written text” (p. 458). The language used to communicate in the classroom can be seen as a form of culture, which needs to be studied and observed in the moment to truly understand the communicative components of the conversation, not solely focusing in on the grammatical aspects of the language (Duranti, 2003). There are underlying relationships between the “grammar of English and the ways in which English is organized in use by teachers, by children, and by the communities from which they come; with the features of intonation, tone of voice, rhythm, style” (Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1972, p. xiii). Duranti (2003) discusses a goal of discourse analysis as one that focuses not only on the speakers but also the activities within the domain of the culture, to evaluate the “relationship between the language and the context” (p. 330). Analysis as such includes looking at not only the words being used in the classroom, but also the actions that are occurring and how the members, or participants, of the classroom engage with each other during a set time frame and activity (Gee & Green, 1998; Gumperz, 1986).

In education, discourse analysis has been coupled with ethnographic approaches to answer the questions of what needs to be learned, what is learned, and how discourse in the classroom actually impact learning (Gee & Green, 1998; Gumperz, 1986). Gee and Green (1998) use logic-of-inquiry as a method to investigate “learning in social settings” (p. 120). In the logic-of-inquiry perspective presented by Gee and Green (1998), there are four components: “situated meanings, cultural models, reflexivity, and ethnographic perspectives” (p. 121). Situated meanings (Gee & Green, 1998) refer to the “image or pattern” (p. 122) that the participants in a conversation or interaction form based upon our past experiences or schema. It is in situated meanings that contextualization cues help the participant as to the meanings of words or the grammar being used (Gee & Green, 1998). Contextualization cues are the way in which “speakers signal and listeners interpret what the activity is, *how* [original italicized] semantic content is to be understood and how each sentence relates to what precedes or follows” (Gumperz, 1986, p. 131). Cultural models help to explain to the participants of a group, “why words have the range of situated meanings they do for members and shape members’ ability to construct new ones” (p. 123). In the cultural model, words may have different meanings to different groups of people based upon the backgrounds and experiences of those involved in the situation (Gee & Green, 1998). The ethnographic perspective of discourse analysis allows the researcher to gain an “emic (insider’s) perspective” (p. 126) and allows the researcher to look at how discourse impacted what needed to be learned and how much was learned. Reflexivity (Gee & Green, 1998) is based on how “language gives meaning to and gets meaning from social activity” (p. 127). Gee and Green (1998) approach reflexivity from the viewpoint of ethnomethodology, which enables members to arrange conversation around them along with the activity occurring. As stated by Gee and Green “reflexivity is seen in what members orient to,

how the coordinate . . . interactions, what positions . . . they take, and what rights and obligations they hold each other accountable for” (p. 131). Gee and Green’s (1998) viewpoint of reflexivity supports that of Bakhtin’s (1986); the nature of the speak-hearer (dialogic) relationship is based on the speaker’s response and the meaning that can be constructed during conversation.

Instructional conversations. In a literacy rich classroom where children are learning, conversation must be occurring in order for the students to construct knowledge (Many, 2002). The best place for these conversations to occur is in small groups of students led by a teacher (Ediger, 2010; Jaramillo, 1996; Many, 2006; Nystrand, 2006). In the setting of small groups, the discourse of these instructional conversations are more dialogic in nature rather than the triadic nature of the I-R-E (Initiate-Response-Evaluation) sequence (Many, 2006; Nystrand, 2006). The dialogic nature of these conversations then allows the power of the conversation to be equally distributed among the participants and is not held just for the teacher (Nystrand, 2006). Nystrand and Gamoran’s (1991) study of the impact of discourse on reading comprehension in English class was completed at the middle school and high school level. Nystrand (2006) reflected upon the 1991 study stating that the dialogic quality of the discourse in the classroom increased student learning and provided an open exchange of ideas, which in turn enabled the students to recall and retain more from the readings. In classrooms (Nystrand & Gamaron, 1991) where conversation was held to the I-R-E and was strictly focused on recitation, the results exhibited that the students did not retain information but even more so the students became disengaged from the lesson and in essence chose not to participate.

Power and discourse. In thinking about a classroom, one can envision a teacher in front of the room talking to the students-a traditional classroom setting (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001; Cazden, 2001). It is within this traditional classroom setting that the power lies with the teacher

as the authoritarian (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001; Cazden, 2001). The power of discourse has been inlaid in classroom discussions through the use of the triadic discourse I-R-E sequence: initiate (teacher asks question), response or reply (a student answers), and evaluation (the teacher's evaluation of the student's response) (Cazden, 1986; Candela, 1999; Fisher & Larkin, 2008; Goldenberg, 1995; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). The topics controlled in this type of discourse are teacher directed and content is delivered; however, there is no allowance for student learning or reflection (Goldenberg, 1995, Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). Cullen (1998) would agree that I-R-E is not an effective method of teacher talk or discourse as the teacher holds all the power. In a classroom where the teacher holds the power in discourse, the students also have the power to resist learning what the teacher is presenting (Candela, 1999), also affecting engagement in the lesson (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). When students are engaged in a lesson or task within the classroom, their construction of knowledge becomes more active, providing the students with opportunities to use more of their own power in the discourse within the classroom (Candela, 1999).

Fisher and Larkin (2008) examined student and teacher expectations for talk and found that teachers were not able to express what actually constituted "good talking" except that being quiet, polite, using proper grammar, and pronunciation were all components. The students within this study expressed that they understood what was expected regarding talk in the classroom, i.e. the teacher is always in control as there are rule for when talk is acceptable and when it is not (Fisher & Larkin, 2008). The students expressed that if "good talking" (Fisher & Larkin, 2008, p. 12) was used, then that was a sign that they were also good students. In the students' minds, their teachers believed that "good talking" included conversations that revolved around the lesson being taught or about what was taking place in the context of the school day.

It was during these conversations that the teachers were not as critical of the students' speech, their use of vocabulary, or the confidence in which the students spoke (Fisher & Larkin, 2008). However, when the students attempted to have conversations about something that was of interest to them, the teachers interpreted these conversations as having a lack of vocabulary and were reflective of homes in which the use of language was not a priority (Fisher & Larkin, 2008).

Talk that promotes learning. In the context of the classroom and learning, discourse can take place in the form of teacher talk and student talk (Aukerman & Zacher Pandya, 2013; Cazden, 2001). Teachers are being asked to lead discussions to help stimulate the higher-order thinking skills of students and students are being asked to listen, learn, and respond to the teachers (Cazden & Beck, 2003). Many times teacher talk can also be related to the power of discourse in the classroom where the teacher talks and the students listen (Ladson-Billings, 2009). The ability of successful teacher talk in the classroom can set the tone for learning with the students (Kohl, 2002). Kohl (2002) continued by stating that it is not what you say as the teacher in the classroom, but also how the language, the "inflection, tone, modulation, and vocabulary" (p. 147), you use with your students is understood and how much you understand the language or talk of your students that matters in teaching. The "comments, questions, responses, phrases, tone- often make big differences in student attitudes, not merely toward their teachers, but toward what their teachers teach" (Kohl, 2002, p. 153), which in turn keeps the students interested and engaged. The emphasis of the teacher talk needs to shift from the quantity of teacher talk to more of the quality of the teacher talk and how teachers facilitate learning within their classrooms (Cullen, 1998). Keeping students engaged in the lesson can help them stay on top of the critical thinking that is needed to help them set goals and allow them

to own what they are learning (Harvey & Goudvis, 2013). Engaged students can set goals for learning which then empowers them to feel successful about the learning, again positively affecting their sense of self-efficacy, which impacts student achievement as well. If the teacher is talking too much, then the students do not have time to respond or contribute to the discussion, this can lead to a lack of engagement on behalf of the students (Cullen, 1998).

Classroom talk, culture, and learning. In a classroom that promotes talk for learning, students would be allowed to speak and explain their reasoning and answers to questions through discussion with the teacher and classmates (Michaels, O'Connor, & Resnick, 2008). It is through this type of talk where students would be encouraged to draw upon their cultures and “home-based genres of argument and explication, while practicing and honing new representational and discursive tools” (Michaels et al., 2008, p. 286). According to Michaels et al. (2008), this practice of classroom talk involves three components: (a) accountability to the learning community, (b) accountability to knowledge, and (c) “accountability to accepted standards of reasoning” (p. 286). Within the learning community, it is important for all the participants to listen to each other, building ideas off of others’ comments, carrying on the conversation and clarifying questions (Michaels et al., 2008). Questions that would represent accountability to the learning community could include, “does anyone else want to add on?” or “who can put into their own words what Keisah just said?” (Michaels et al., 2008, p. 286). In the accountability of knowledge, participants are required to have a base understanding of the topic of discussion, allowing them to carry on the conversation with the use of facts or texts possibly challenging what others may have to say regarding the topic (Michaels et al., 2008). Finally, “accountability to standards of reasoning” (Michaels et al., 2008, p. 287) refers to the students being able to make connections from topic to topic and then being able to draw conclusions

based on those connections with teacher guidance. The key component in classroom talk as discussed by Michaels et al. (2008) is the accountability to the learning community; without it, students may not feel safe to speak out, express personal ideas, or challenge their peers in discussion.

The instance of classroom talk discussed by Michaels et al. (2008) is structured more toward whole group, while Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) focused on the idea of student talk in small group settings. During “substantive engagement” (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991, p. 266), students and the teachers share ideas in a conversation based on reciprocity; the students share an idea, the teacher then takes that idea and adds to it, sustaining the conversation across many participants (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). In the use of substantive engagement, there is an equal sharing to who holds the control and power in the conversation as the conversation holds reciprocity (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991), whereas in the classroom talk model the teacher still ultimately holds the control and power of the discussion as it is whole group and guided by the teacher (Michaels et al., 2008).

Teacher feedback. Hattie and Timperley (2007) describe feedback as, “information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience” regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding . . . thus a ‘consequence’ of performance” (p. 81). Brophy (1981) speaks to teacher feedback as a component of praise intended to act as a reinforcer that has been utilized as a facilitator in the learning process. Praise, as defined by Brophy (1981) is a way to “express approval or admiration” (p. 5), which Hattie and Timperley (2007) regard as ineffective when given in conjunction with a task performance as praise has “little learning-related information” (p. 86). Examples of praise in Brophy’s (1981) functional analysis are “okay, right, or correct” (p. 5), and Brophy states that praise does not inform students of the

degree of success achieved in the completion of tasks. Effective feedback should answer the following questions: (a) where is the student heading in terms of his/her goals to accomplish the task, (b) what progress has been made in accomplishing the task, and (c) what does the student need to do to make the task better, how can the task be improved (Hattie & Timperley, 2007)? In their meta-analysis Hattie and Timperley (2007) determined that the effect of feedback on motivation is most effective when used to provide information “on the correct rather than incorrect response and when it builds on changes from previous traits” (p. 85), when the threat to one’s self-esteem is low, and when the feedback is specific to set goals. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), there are four levels of feedback (a) about the specific task and whether it has been completed with accuracy including following the directions; (b) on the method of completing the task, the processing of the information, or learning process involved in the task; (c) on self-evaluation of the task encouraging or informing the students how the task could be completed in a different manner, and (d) feedback that is directed specifically at the student. Examples of feedback provided by Hattie and Timperley (2007) include phrases such as: “This page may make more sense if you use the strategies that we talked about earlier” (p. 90) or “you’re really great because you have diligently completed this task by applying this concept” (p. 96).

Negative versus positive feedback. The act of providing feedback can have powerful effects, both negative and positive (Munoz, Scoskie, & French, 2013). When a student is in the process of learning and is invested in the process, positive feedback is more significant while negative feedback can be more influential when a student undertakes a task in which he/she is not invested (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). While addressing students with low self-efficacy, a teacher should employ a positive approach regarding the students’ success; however, the praise

should then be followed through with any deficiencies that need to be addressed to assist the student in future tasks that may be similar in nature (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Burnett (1999) refers to the implications of feedback as the “power of positive” (p. 198), through positive interactions with teachers to the students. The interactions include positive feedback and praise, reflecting the students overall performance and beliefs about their performance in math and as learners (Burnett, 1999). Burnett (1999) suggests that children who believe their teachers feel positively about their math performance subsequently have higher math scores and stronger self-concepts. The same holds true for those students who feel their teacher had little or nothing positive to say about their performance scored lower on math assessments and lower self-concepts (Burnett, 1999). Positive comments within the classroom can also influence students’ self-concept in reading (Burnett, 1999).

A positive feedback loop is created when teachers provide a climate that is supportive, “characterized by lows levels of conflict and disruptive behavior” (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 492) and smooth transitions from subject to subject. The positive classroom provides a climate that promotes learning for all students. Bandura (1993) states that learning environments that are positive and provide a sense of accomplishment for all students within the classroom are “well suited for building a sense of efficacy that promotes academic achievement” (p. 125). Teachers promoting this type of environment are considered socially and emotionally competent, who “know how to generate and use emotions such as joy and enthusiasm to motivate learning in themselves and others” (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 495). In addition, these teachers act as positive role models for the students. Characteristics of socially and emotionally competent teachers include the ability to build relationships with others, understand different perspectives, as well as possessing cultural awareness (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

In her study on teachers' beliefs and sense of efficacy, Payne (1994) identified teachers as "significant teachers" and "non-significant teachers." Teachers who were termed "significant" had a positive demeanor praising students, encouraging participation, as well as supplying the students with positive feedback (Payne, 1994). The positive approach within the classroom also indirectly addressed the students' sense of self-efficacy or the beliefs that one can complete a task with positive outcomes (Bandura, 1977). The "significant" teachers were also more likely to use high-order thinking strategies with students and personalized lessons to meet the needs of their students (Payne, 1994). These were the teachers who seemed genuinely concerned for their students' well-being and growth in the classroom

In comparison, the "non-significant" teachers were negative in their approach with students (Payne, 1994). These teachers struggled to keep students engaged in lessons, used lower order thinking strategies, and did not feel as though they could teach the students within the classroom (Payne, 1994). According to Payne (1994), negative attitudes within the classroom tend to destroy the potential bond that students may have with their teachers. The lack of a bond can create resistance on the students' part to learn and being open to thought of learning (Payne, 1994). Bandura's (1977) theories regarding self-efficacy and the effect on students' motivation reinforces Payne's (1994) finding that negative influences can harm students' self-efficacy and their desire to learn.

Conclusion

The themes that emerged from the review of literature include: (a) a student's sense of self-efficacy contributes to the motivation, attitude, and expectations toward learning as well as the ability to be successful in reading (Bandura, 1977, 1993; Brophy, 1987; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011; Wheatley, 2002); (b) positive reinforcement or verbal support from teacher to

student as well as respect are key elements that contribute to motivation (Ford & Quinn, 2010; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jussim, 1989; Kohl, 2002; Payne, 1994; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011); (c) providing a pedagogy in reading that is engaging, positive, and culturally relevant (Au & Raphael, 2000; Gambrell et al., 2011; Haberman, 1991, 2010; Johnson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 2009); (d) utilizing best practices in reading promotes (Morrow & Gambrell 2011; Pressley et al, 2011; Snow et al.,; Robb, 2013), (e) learning and reading is a social process that can only be enhanced by the use of conversations and equal access to conversation (Allington, 2002; Jaramillo, 1996; Kohl, 2002; Michaels et al., 2008); (f) the discourse utilized in the classroom and the power of teacher-talk that is portrayed through the discourse can significantly hinder student involvement and impact engagement (Brophy, 1991; Gambrell et al., 2011; Guthrie et al., 2013; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991).

Teachers may hold expectations for their students based upon more than just the students' ability; socio-economic status, ethnicity and/or race may influence these expectations (Au & Raphael, 2000; Harvey & Slatin, 1975; Diamond et al., 2004). When the expectations held for a student are exhibited in a manner different from and with a different attitude than those held for that student's peers, the expectations seem to affect the engagement (Maloch, 2005). Teacher expectations cannot only be delivered to students both verbally, in the form of feedback or praise, but also nonverbally through the actions and facial expression used by the teacher (Gee & Green, 1998; Gumperz, 1986). Discourse, the language of the classroom, along with the contextualization cues that are used when in conversations with students can also be reflective of teacher expectations. As Kohl (2002) stated, it is not simply what you say, how you say it, but also how you interpret your students' language in the classroom and how they interpret yours that matters.

The expectations that a teacher holds for a student can also affect the student self-efficacy in reading (Schunk, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Self-efficacy seems to play an invaluable role in the relationship between teacher, student, and reading achievement. An interesting connection between student and teacher is that both can have low self-efficacy; although it may be for different reasons, the idea of low self-efficacy in both the teacher and student affects the overall goal, which is reading achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). A teacher's low self-efficacy in his/her ability to teach reading can also cause the pedagogical practices of the teacher to be substandard than that of his/her peers who may be stronger in reading instruction (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011; Wheatley, 2002). Using direct instruction or rote practices in reading may cause the students' reading levels to be lower as less is required of the student (Brophy, 1991; Haberman, 1991). Bandura's (1993) work has clear implications about the impact self-efficacy can have in the area of reading. As students are learning to read, they will make many mistakes and sometimes students misunderstand those mistakes as an inability to learn. Educators need to be able to make connections with their students and be able to help students understand that mistakes are part of the learning process. When students misinterpret mistakes as a negative outcome, the motivation of that reader can then be drastically impacted.

Motivation is a complicated and important factor in the success or failure of the readers we serve as educators. It is essential that teachers change their approaches in assisting students at all grade levels in the area of reading. Educators need to help readers celebrate the successes they experience in their reading activities (Guthrie et al., 2012) to help them build their self-efficacy and thus build their intrinsic motivation (Bandura, 1977; Baker & Wigfield, 1999).

What is lacking from the research is what Bloome & Willis (2013) question: what type of instructional discourse can lead to literacy learning? The discourse that occurs within the classroom seems to be teacher led and directed, especially at the middle and high school levels as reflected in the literature; however, there were few studies found that focused on the discourse that occurs in elementary settings, or student talk, and how that discourse can lead to successful literacy learning for all students, even those at risk.

The talk that takes place during reading instruction can be used as a dialogic tool to help foster the learning of the student (Gambrell et al., 2011); however, what seems to be missing are the details of the talk, as well as the talk that takes place in lower elementary classrooms- specifically in second and third grade. How are students being addressed by teachers, what is the tone of the discussion, is the inflection of what is being said appropriate for the students, and is the vocabulary appropriate for the learners that are being addressed? The conversations that are taking place within the classroom have significant implications for making learning successful, “the presentation of self in the classroom is a major part of the effectiveness of connecting with students and enhancing their learning” (Kohl, 2002, p. 151). Therefore, further research for this study will focus on self-efficacy and the link to classroom discourse, teacher talk, and student reading achievement.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study explored teacher-student discourse that occurred during the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block in order to understand the connection between self-efficacy, motivation, and attitudes of the readers. Participant observations were video recorded and analyzed using conversational analysis focusing on turn taking (dyadic and multiparty) and the use of questioning during literacy instruction with below grade-level readers. Teacher and student interview data were collected and reviewed for common themes. The *Motivation to Read Profile Survey* (Gambrell et al., 1996) was given to students. In order to answer the research question, being present in the classroom setting was essential in the research design as well as gaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

Research Questions

This study explored the discourse between teachers and students during reading instruction through the following questions:

1. What does the classroom discourse look like during reading instruction and does it show evidence of best practices?
2. How do the students perceive of themselves as readers?
3. How do the teachers perceive their students as readers?
4. What supports are in place for below grade-level readers and their teachers?

Site and Participants

This study was carried out in Parkside, an urban midwestern charter school with permission from the administration to conduct the study. At the time of the study, the population of roughly 330 students was 99% African American and 1% Hispanic. The school was fully Title I funded and also received funds through section 31a of the State School Aid Act for “at risk.” In an effort to keep the size of the classrooms small there were two classrooms for kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. The upper elementary only had one classroom per grade level. At the beginning of the school year, there were approximately 85 out of 330 students who were identified as struggling readers in kindergarten through fifth grade. Across the second and third grade classrooms, there were 83 students; 64 of whom were below grade-level readers.

The students. A convenience sample of students was chosen on the basis of the students’ grade level, reading proficiencies, attendance rates, and permissions granted by the parents and/or guardians of the students. Students who had high absentee rates were excluded from this study along with those students who possessed an Individual Education Plans (IEP) in any area. As the focus of the study was on second and third grade readers (O’Connor, Fulmer, Harty, & Bell, 2006), this was the first step in the selection process. The students in this study were all below grade level. The students ranged in levels from kindergarten to a second grade reading, putting them at least one grade level behind. These students were receiving support outside of the classroom through Parkside’s RtI program, which included small group instruction in a guided reading or one-on-one instruction.

Ten students from the second and third grade were then selected based upon their reading levels as focal students (Table 3.1). Those students who were two or more grade levels behind in reading met the second set of selection criteria. Students who returned the letter of consent from his/her parent or guardian were then selected. One of the third grade participants had a high rate of absenteeism and not in the classroom during observational times and had to be dropped from the study. Therefore, observations were not completed in the third grade room during this study.

Table 3.1

Student Information

Student	Grade	Gender	Race	Teacher	DRA Level Prior Year/Current Year	DRA Grade Level Equivalency
Bianca	2	Female	African American	Ms. Sax	3/4	K
Britney	2	Female	African American	Ms. Sax	12/12	1 st
Henry	2	Male	African American	Ms. White	8/14	1 st
Jack	3	Male	African American	Ms. White	18/18	2 nd
Jim	2	Male	African American	Ms. White	6/10	1 st
Luke	2	Male	African American	Ms. White	10/10	1 st
Marie	2	Female	African American	Ms. Sax	NA/8	1 st
Scott	2	Male	African American	Ms. White	10/10	1 st
Stephanie	2	Female	African American	Ms. Sax	6/14	1 st

TC	3	Male	African American	Ms. Sunny	NA/18	2 nd
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Second grade students. The majority of the students in this study were second graders. Henry, Jim, Luke, and Scott were in Ms. White's second/third grade split classroom. Bianca, Britney, Marie, and Stephanie were in Ms. Sax's second grade classroom.

Henry. Henry is an African American male who lives with both parents in the same city where the school is located. At the time of the study, Henry was reading at a DRA 14, which was a first grade reading level. Henry was part of the RtI program during first grade for reading. During first grade Henry started the year at a DRA 3, which is an appropriate level for a beginning first grader. As the year progressed he plateaued at a DRA 8 in the spring, which put him at risk academically going into second grade. At that point, the RtI team placed him in Tier II toward the end of his first grade year. Henry was never retained and was never referred for Specialized Services through Special Education; however, he did have excessive absences during the year of the study.

Jim. Jim is an African American male who lives with both his mother and father in a neighboring city to the school. Jim has younger siblings at home that do not attend the school. During the time of the study, Jim was reading at a DRA 10, which is a first grade reading level. Jim was recommended for retention last year in first grade due to attendance issues. He arrived at Parkside in January as a first grader. At that time he was reading at a DRA 6, which meant he was starting to fall behind in reading; therefore, the RtI team placed him in Tier II. By February Jim was still at a DRA 6 and was, therefore, placed in a Tier III support group. Because first graders should finish the year at a DRA 16 Jim's reading level put him at significant academic risk.

Luke. Luke is an African American male who lives with his mother and brother in the same city as Parkside. Luke was reading at a DRA 10, which is a first grade reading level. He has struggled in reading since he arrived at this school in Kindergarten. In first grade, Luke started the year in Tier II but then stopped making progress in his first semester, so he was then moved into Tier III. When he was put into Tier III he was reading at a DRA 2 (Kindergarten) and progressed to a DRA 10 by June of first grade. Luke had excessive absences in kindergarten and first grade; he was referred for Specialized Services through Special Education last year while in the RtI program and was identified during the year of this study (spring) resulting in additional instruction time with a Special Education Teacher for reading.

Scott. Scott is an African American male who lives with his parents in the same city as the school and has an older sister and younger brother who do not attend Parkside. He started at Parkside in first grade reading on track at a DRA 4; however, Scott missed a great deal of first grade due to a medical problem. Upon returning from his medical absence, he was still at a DRA 4 and was placed in Tier III until the end of first grade. In June of first grade, Scott was reading at a DRA 10, three levels behind where he should have been. Scott was still reading at a DRA 10 at the time of the study.

Bianca. Bianca is an African American female who is one of three siblings who attends Parkside; her older sister is in fifth grade and her older brother is in third grade. Bianca struggled in reading and was in Tier III of the RtI program. When Bianca finished first grade, she was reading at DRA 3 (Kindergarten). She lives with her mother, siblings, and her stepfather in the same city as Parkside. At the time of the study, Bianca was reading at a DRA 4, which was a Kindergarten level. Bianca had excessive absences during first grade and again during the

year of this study, which was attributed to the fact that she lived outside the area where bussing services were provided.

Britney. Britney is an African American female, living with her four-year-old sister and her mother in the same city as Parkside. Britney was a part of the RtI program last year and was in the program again the year of the study. At the beginning of first grade, Britney was reading at a DRA 2 and was placed in Tier III. By December of her first grade year, she was making progress in reading (DRA 6) and was moved to Tier II. Her reading level at the end of first grade was a DRA 10, three levels behind. At the time of the study, Britney was reading at a DRA 12, which was a first grade reading level.

Marie. Marie is an African American female who lives with her mother and her cousins in the same city as Parkside. This was Marie's first year at this school. During the study, Marie was reading at a DRA 8, which was a first grade level. She had excessive absences during the time of this study and was also a part of the RtI program in Tier III.

Stephanie. Stephanie is an African American female who lives with her mother and younger sister in the same city as the school. Stephanie's father passed away during the time of the study. Stephanie started attending this school in first grade. During first grade she was a part of the RtI program. She started first grade at a DRA 3 (Kindergarten) and was placed in Tier III. Due to her progress, she was moved to Tier II by December of her first grade year with a DRA 6 level. She finished first grade at a DRA 14, almost at grade level (DRA 16). At the time of the study, Stephanie was reading at a DRA 14, which was a first grade level.

Third grade students. TC and Jack were the only third grade students in the study. TC was in the traditional third grade classroom and Jack was in the second/third grade split. The

second/third grade split had the lower third grade readers while the traditional third grade classroom had the higher readers, based on their reading levels at the beginning of the year.

Jack. Jack is an African American male who has attended Parkside since first grade. He lives with his mother in the same city as Parkside. During second grade, Jack was part of the RtI program and was also a student in a first/second grade split. Jack's reading level at the beginning of first grade was a DRA 2 (Kindergarten) he was placed into Tier III. Jack was suspended in the first grade several times per month due to fighting, which resulted in poor attendance. At the end of first grade, he finished on grade level DRA 16. At the time of the study, Jack was reading at a DRA 18, which was a second grade reading level.

TC. TC is an African American male in his first year at Parkside. He arrived at Parkside in November and was placed in the traditional third grade room due to high enrollment in the second/third grade split. He lives with his mother in a neighboring city. At the time of this study, TC was reading at a DRA 18, which was a second grade reading level. TC had significant absences during the time of the study and eventually transferred to another school near the end of the study.

The teachers. The teachers chosen to participate in this study were the second and third grade teachers in the building. One of the teachers had been teaching for 18 years while the other two teachers had been teaching less than five years. The researcher sent a personal email to the teachers and explained the study and invited them to participate. Administration and teachers at the school were approached to discuss the focus of this study; it was explained to all involved that this study was about reading in the classroom and reading instruction. A meeting was held with all three teachers to discuss any concerns and to gain the letters of consent from the teachers (Appendix A).

Ms. White, Ms. Sax, and Ms. Sunny, who were the second and third grade teachers at Parkside K-8 School, come from a variety of backgrounds (Table 3.2). Ms. White had taught for 18 years, Ms. Sax was in her first year of teaching, and Ms. Sunny was in her fifth year of teaching but only her third year as a classroom teacher. Class sizes for the teachers in this study ranged from 27-28 students. Their students' reading levels ranged from kindergarten level to on-grade level with more than half of their student reading below grade level. None of the teachers had certifications in reading or language arts.

Table 3.2

Teacher and Classroom Information

Teacher	Grade Taught	Total Number of Students	# Readers At-Above Grade Level/ # Below Grade Level	Certification	Yrs. in Teaching/ Yrs. at this School
Ms. Sax	2 nd	28	12/16	K-5 inclusive 6-8 Biblical Studies	1/1
Ms. White	2 nd /3 rd split	27	6/21	K-5 inclusive	18/17
Ms. Sunny	3 rd	28	1/27	K-5 inclusive 6-8 Math 6-8 Science	5/4

Ms. White. Ms. White, who taught a second/third grade split at Parkside School, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Child Development and Early Elementary Education and a Master of Arts in Education both obtained from the same online educational institution. Ms. White is certified K-5 inclusive. She remembered taking one or two reading courses in the process of obtaining her degrees; however, she could not recall what those particular classes were or when she took them. She has taught for eighteen years, 17 of those years at Parkside. Ms. White has taught second grade for ten years and has also taught first, third, fourth, and fifth

grade. Ms. White, who is African American, was born and raised in the inner city where she continues to live. Her favorite subjects to teach are reading and social studies.

Ms. Sax. Ms. Sax taught second grade, obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree from a traditional four-year university in Georgia and is certified to teach in both Georgia and Michigan. Her certification is K-5 inclusive and 6-8 biblical studies. During her studies at the university, she took a reading methods as well as a children's literature class. Ms. Sax just completed her first year of teaching, admitting that teaching second grade was significantly different from her student teaching experience in fourth grade. Ms. Sax is a young, African American female who came to Parkside having attended private schools her whole life. Ms. Sax enjoys teaching both social studies and science.

Ms. Sunny. Ms. Sunny taught third grade, obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree from a local four-year university and is certified to teach in Michigan. She did not remember taking any reading courses during her undergraduate studies. Ms. Sunny's certification is K-5 inclusive, 6-8 math, and 6-8 science. She just completed her fifth year of teaching the last four of which have been at Parkside. This was her third year of being a classroom teacher as she was the math interventionist for two years. Last year, Ms. Sunny taught middle school science at Parkside School. Prior to her position as a math interventionist at Parkside, she taught in a Montessori School near her home in a neighboring county. During her time in the Montessori School she taught a multi-aged class of students in first through third grade. Ms. Sunny is a young, Caucasian female. Her favorite subject to teach is math.

Parkside¹ School Reading Program

¹ Pseudonyms are used to ensure anonymity.

At Parkside the teachers had access to the Harcourt reading series, Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA), a Response to Intervention Program (RtI), and guided reading materials. The school utilized a commercial reading series from Harcourt entitled *Trophies* (2003). However, the school only provided the teachers with the *Trophies* Teacher's Manual and class sets of student copies of the reading anthologies. The Teacher's Manual included guidelines for reading comprehension with phonics and vocabulary instruction for each story, which were organized around themes. The anthologies included a combination of narrative and expository texts. It was optional for the teachers to include guided reading; if the teacher chose to use guided reading as an instructional strategy, there were leveled guided reading materials available to check out and use within their classrooms. The guided reading material ranged from a Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) level A (Kindergarten) up to a DRA level 60 (sixth grade) and were centrally located in the library.

According to the Parkside's K-5 grade class schedule, ELA/Reading-Vocabulary was to take place daily from 8:15-9:15 a.m. (Appendix H). The schedule did not specify how this hour was to be spent it was just labeled as ELA/Reading-Vocabulary. The classrooms at Parkside School were provided with mini-classroom libraries established by the reading specialist. The classroom libraries included a variety of reading levels and genres of books brought over from a closed school within the same district. The levels of the books ranged from kindergarten to third grade in the three classrooms in this study. The libraries also included trade books and chapter books for the students to read.

A Response to Intervention (RtI) program at Parkside was comprised of three Tiers. Tier I included the classroom instruction which was to be differentiated to meet the needs of the students. The target was to meet the needs of at least 80% of the students within the classroom.

To assist in supporting Tier I instruction, the building employed para-educators. The two second grade classrooms received para-educator support during the afternoon from the same para-educator. The third grade class also shared a para-educator with another classroom receiving support in the afternoon. Tier II was the next layer of intervention, which was comprised of those students who were one reading level below grade-level; this covered 10-15% of the students. Tier III was the most intense tier focusing on those students who were two or more reading levels below their grade-level. Tier III consisted of 5% of students from each classroom. The 10-15% of students in Tier II and the 5% of students in Tier III was the model used by the school; however, the percentages of students in each tier were sometimes greater. The RtI program included certified teachers who worked with Tiers II and III students in pullout sessions. Students in Tier II worked with an interventionist three to four days per week for approximately 30 minutes for each session. Tier III students worked with an interventionist four to five days per week for approximately 30 minutes per session in small groups of three to five students. The Tier II and III interventionists focused on specific student needs during sessions in a guided reading format.

Students were placed in the RtI program based on their reading levels using the DRA assessment that was given three times a year. The students' reading levels were evaluated after each testing period and were utilized to place students in the appropriate tiers. The DRA reading levels vary from grade level to grade level (Table 3.3). The ranges for kindergarten start at A then are numbered consecutively from Level 1 to Level 4. At first grade, the levels are represented by even numbered levels: 4, 6, 8, 10, 14, and 16. The second grade levels start at 18 and are numbered as follows: 20, 24, and 28. The third grade levels are 30, 34, and 38. Fourth and fifth grade levels are 40 and 50 respectively.

Table 3.3

DRA Grade Level Reading Ranges

Grade	Fall Benchmark	Winter Benchmark	Spring Benchmark
Kindergarten	None	Level A to Level 1	Level 3 to Level 4
First	Level 4	Level 8 to Level 10	Level 16
Second	Level 18	Level 20	Level 28
Third	Level 30	Level 34	Level 38
Fourth	Level 40		
Fifth	Level 50		

Eight of the ten children in the study were in second grade two were in third grade (Table 3.1). All were reading two to seven DRA levels (Table 3.3) below their current grade levels and in Tier III in RtI. Their sessions with the Tier III reading interventionist took place outside of the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary Block, which was considered core instruction. Eight (Bianca, Britney, Henry, Jack, Jim, Luke, Scott, and Stephanie) of the ten students were in the program last year. The other two (Marie, and TC) students did not attend Parkside last year. Nine of the students had excessive absences during the prior school year as well as during the year of the study; Scott was the only student who did not have excessive absences.

The purpose of the study was explained to parents/guardians and students prior to the beginning of the study through a formal letter from the researcher. The letters were distributed to students asking parents/guardians to sign the letters of consent (Appendix B). These letters were asked to be returned to the researcher at the school. School administration collected the letters and held them in sealed envelopes until delivered to the researcher. An informational meeting was offered but not held for the parents or guardians as there were no questions

regarding the research that was conducted. The meeting was meant to help to provide a deeper understanding of the research with the participants, allowing questions to be asked of the researcher, but was not be required for participation. The researcher provided two weeks for the letters of consent from the parents/guardians to be returned. Parents/guardians who did not return the forms within the allotted time period received a phone call from the researcher as a reminder. Once the researcher had received the letters of consent from the parents/guardians, the letters of assent for the students (Appendix C) were explained and signed with the researcher in the library of the school.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collected included archival data from benchmark reading assessments of the students, interview data with the teachers and students, participant observation data, and survey data. The data were collected over a three-month time period in 2016. During the data collection period, the site was visited one to two times per week. Each visit lasted from one to three hours dependent upon how many classrooms were visited. All participants' names have been kept anonymous with pseudonyms. Transcribed data was kept on the researcher's personal laptop and was housed in M-box, a secure site to which only the researcher had access; the laptop was secured in a locked office when not with the researcher. This data was transcribed using phonetic spelling in order to catch participants' exact words and phrases during interviews and observations. Recorded data were kept and housed on the recording device until the researcher's dissertation study was completed when the recordings were destroyed.

Archival data. The researcher asked the second and third grade teachers to recommend below grade-level students for this study based upon the students' benchmark reading data, which was Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) (Beaver, 2006), as well as students'

universal screening data from the fall and winter assessments. Only second and third grade reading scores were examined by the researcher. These data were used to narrow down the students chosen to participate in this case study as the data provided the researcher with the students' reading levels and indicated those students who struggled to read at grade level. Those students reading two or more years behind grade level were chosen as these are the students most at risk for failure.

Survey data. It was important in this study to understand the students' motivation levels in reading prior to conducting interviews and making observations. Therefore, the *Motivation to Read Profile Survey* (Gambrell et al., 1996) (Appendix D) was used to help establish a base line of understanding regarding the students in the study and their motivation to read along with their value of reading. The administration of this survey took place at the beginning of the study.

The *Motivation to Read Profile Survey* (Gambrell et al., 1996) was read aloud to a small groups of no more than five students at a time. This was done to ensure that students understood the questions in the survey, hopefully allowing for the students to feel they could provide candid answers. The researcher worked with the classroom teachers and determined an appropriate time during the day to administer these surveys based on student attendance and tardiness to ensure that all students in the study were included in these data.

This survey was based on a four-point scale comprised of 20 questions. Ten items on the survey related to students' self-concepts as readers and the other ten items focused on how much students value reading (Gambrell et. al, (1996). When computing the scores for the surveys, subscales were listed for both the self-concept questions as well as the value of reading questions. Once the scores were tabulated for each student, triangulation between the survey, the

student interviews, artifacts, and observations can begin. The survey provided direct information on the students' value of reading and how they see themselves as readers.

Interviews. All interviews were conducted with students and teachers utilizing semi-structured interview protocols (Appendix E and Appendix F). The participants in the interview process had the option of not answering questions that caused them to feel uncomfortable. The interviews conducted were audio recorded utilizing a simple audio recorder. The researcher asked the participants' permission prior to recording as it was optional. Detailed notes were taken during the interviews as long as the participants were comfortable with the note taking. After the interviews were completed, analytic memos were added to the transcriptions. When the transcriptions were completed, the original recordings were housed on the researcher's computer and were destroyed after the dissertation study was concluded.

Teacher interviews. Interviews with the three teachers enabled analysis of the thoughts that teachers had concerning teaching reading and the expectations they had for the below grade-level readers within their classrooms (Appendix E). Interviews were conducted one-on-one in their individual classrooms and while the students were at a special, lunch, or prior to the beginning of the day.

A strategy in the interview process was to utilize active listening and use sensitive silence allowing the interviewees to see that the researcher was engaged (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). The questions were kept open-ended and prompts were provided with the teachers to encourage discussion of each question (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). When answers provided by the interviewees needed clarification, then clarification was sought; however, the intent was to not to interrupt the flow of the conversation (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). To ensure validity of the participants' responses during the interview process, the researcher followed-up with questions

or restatements of the participants' words to clarify and confirm the answers (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Student interviews. Interviews with the students were face-to-face (Creswell, 2014) and were comprised of open-ended questions to encourage as much discussion as possible (Appendix F). Student interviews were conducted during a time allowed by the classroom teacher and were held in the school's library where there were no distractions. All students participating in the study were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in a one-on-one setting to make certain the students felt comfortable answering. When interviewing the students, the researcher used the "Uh-huh" prompt as well as prompting with "tell me more" to encourage the students to continue (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). The researcher adhered to 15-20 minutes per student to ensure that the instructional day was not disrupted. Through the interview process, the researcher gained a better understanding of the students' attitudes and motivation towards reading and how those components influenced their ability as readers.

Interview analysis. All interviews were transcribed. In vivo coding was utilized as this coding to allowed words or phrases from the data to emerge as categories (Saldaña, 2013). During in vivo coding, the researcher listened for word choice but also intonation and changes in the volume of the participants' voice, which might represent potential codes or categories in the data (Saldaña, 2013). All interviews were coded individually. The coding from all interviews was analyzed to determine if patterns were emerging from all conducted interviews. As themes emerged from the data, final saturation coding took place through axial coding (Saldaña, 2013). Themes that emerged during interview analysis included low expectations for struggling readers, perceptions of struggling readers, higher expectations for other readers, support, foundational

skills, negative feelings towards struggling readers, feelings towards reading, sounding out words, and reading to others.

Participant observation and field notes. Participant observation entailed the researcher to be the observer as well as the participant in some instances (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). While in the classroom, field notes were taken in a journal to document teacher-student interactions and the physical environment while in the classroom. A video recorder was used to record the discourse and interactions that occurred during observations; daily review of these interactions and discourse allowed for anecdotal notes. Maps of the classrooms were completed during observations to note where the focus children (study participants) were located in the classroom and to specify who the teachers were calling upon during whole group instruction. The location of the focus children was documented on the map. During classroom observations, other students are represented in the transcriptions in addition to the focal children who were not always the students who were speaking. The inclusion of non-focal children allowed for analysis of classroom discourse. The non-focal children have been identified with the label of student 1, student 2, etc. in the transcriptions of the discourse.

The observations were completed during the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary time block and documented the discourse and interactions that occurred between the students and the teacher during instruction (Gee & Green, 1998). All the teachers were informed that the classroom visits were for the purpose of observing reading and reading instruction. It was anticipated that the reading instruction that was to be observed would be small group instruction between the teacher and the struggling readers as well as whole group reading with all the students; however, during the observations instruction was predominantly whole group. Prior to all visits, e-mail reminders

were sent to the teachers reminding them of the focus and alerted them to the dates and times observations would take place.

Being in the classrooms provided an emic perspective “for examining how discourse shapes both what is available to be learned and what is, in fact, learned” (Gee & Green, 1998, p. 126), taking the role as participant observer (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As a reading specialist in a school with similar demographics I had an emic perspective from working in a school similar to Parkside.

The MASS system (material, activity, semiotic, and sociocultural aspects of discourse) (Gee & Green, 1998) was used during observations. The material aspect of the system include those involved in the activity, the time and place of the activity, and where the activity takes place (Gee & Green, 1998). The activity itself consists of what is actually taking place during the observations. The semiotic portion of the system includes not only the language being used during the action but also the gestures presented along with facial expressions and body language used (Gee & Green, 1998). Finally the sociocultural aspect focuses on the interactions that take place during the observation as well as the feelings present during the interactions (Gee & Green, 1998). What is essential is approaching the MASS system in a “part-whole” (p. 135) manner where the components are looked at individually but also as a whole to better understand the meaning of social interaction being observed (Gee & Green, 1998). Analysis of not only what was being said to the students during reading instruction, but how it was said as well as the actions of the teachers during the time was important; time was also noted as to correlate with audio recordings of the classroom instruction. The researcher’s journal was segmented into columns where notations were kept on the participants of the activity, the type of reading task being observed, the conversations that took place, along with the actions that occurred between

the participants-the students and the teacher(s) in the room (Gee & Green 1998) (Appendix G). Observations of how the students reacted to the teachers, what was being said by the students to the teachers in response, and their reactions were recorded on the journal.

The observations and field notes taken were reviewed allowing for analytic notes to be added to the classroom observations. These observation notes were transcribed using Microsoft Word with numbered lines to assist in the identification of emerging themes. Conversational analysis was the method used for coding all classroom observations, focusing on the whole activity instead of just one passage (Gumperz, 1986). Conversational analysis examines transcribed conversations and how an individual's contributions to the conversations are interpreted and understood in a specific moment (Gee, 2014; Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; Johnstone, 2008). Gumperz (1986) further explains that "it is through talking that one establishes the conditions that make an intended interpretation possible" (p. 159). Through conversational analysis, the researcher focused on turn taking (dyadic and multiparty) and the use of questioning during conversations.

Analysis of the observations took place after transcription was completed. The transcription was completed by the researcher while watching the video footage from each day. The transcribing was done by hand. The teachers' and participants' names were used to specify who was talking during the discourse exchange. Non-participants were identified through the use of number. Once the transcriptions were completed analysis began. Patterns of turn taking along with responses to question were the first to appear in the analysis. Once those patterns were identified the topic of the discourse was then identified.

Validation Strategies

To ensure validity of the study, conducting specific validation checks were necessary. These included member-checking, triangulation of data, utilizing a thick description of the findings, and clarifying any bias that may be brought to the study. Triangulation of the data across the interviews, field notes, surveys, artifacts, and participant observations allowed identification of coherent themes that appear in all the data sources (Creswell, 2014). Once the survey scores were tabulated for each student, triangulation between the survey, the student interviews, artifacts, and observations occurred. Following up with teachers during the interviews provided immediate member checking to ensure that essence of what the teachers were saying was truly being captured. Member checking took place with the students as well; however, the member checking for the students took place during the surveys and during the interview process. Member checking with the students enabled the researcher to clarify the students' thoughts and feelings regarding themselves as readers, towards the reading instruction, and towards reading in general. Questions were posed to the students regarding information discussed during interviews or the survey such as; "Do you remember what we discussed the other day in our interview/survey? Do you still feel that way today?"

Ethical Considerations

Utilization of pseudonyms and identification numbers on all artifacts, surveys, interviews, and observations will support anonymity of the site and the participants. As the researcher has had prior interactions with the teachers and the students at the site, it was essential member checking be used to prevent researcher bias.

Chapter 4: Classroom Discourse, Reading Instruction, and Best Practices

In order to answer the questions about classroom discourse, reading instruction, and best practices, this study used conversational analysis, including turn taking and feedback and found that the dominant form of discourse was the Initiation-Response-Evaluation (I-R-E), which did not promote higher-order thinking skills or student engagement. It is argued that this was a contributing factor to the lack of growth in reading achievement for the children in the study. In addition to the (a) I-R-E patterned questioning during reading instruction, the data also revealed that (b) reading instruction was centered on learning words, with time lost due to (c) classroom management, which revealed (d) an absence of best practices.

Classroom Discourse: I-R-E

Initiation, response, evaluation (I-R-E) was the basic form of discourse used during reading instruction. Discourse during the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block focused on recall of ideas and was not focused on making meaning of stories. The questioning that took place focused on a student providing the answer to a question with the teacher occasionally acknowledging the answer and then moving on. The I-R-E pattern that dominated classroom discourse in this study focused strictly on what the students knew in response to a question while the teachers' evaluations of the answers may have included a shake of the head or a simple yes or no. These types of conversations have been shown to not promote engagement in literacy learning (Gee & Green, 1998) or in higher-order thinking skills (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991)

because the teachers knew what questions they wanted to ask, they knew the answer(s) they wanted, and they did not have to engage in conversation with the students (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). During this teacher led instruction, students took turns answering questions posed by the teachers and when students responded to a question there were times when acknowledgement or recognition of the responses did not happen. There were instances where the teacher repeated a student's answer but did not verbally acknowledge the answer. However, there were also times when the teachers repeated the response and provided a non-verbal gesture or change in their tone of voice. Instances occurred when the teacher did not repeat the student answer or use a gesture yet asked another question in the same exchange. At times Ms. White and Ms. Sax would make direct eye contact with the student answering the question but there were times when they did not. In the analysis of the transcribed data, the flow of turn taking was evaluated (Johnstone, 2008) and essentially there was no turn-taking that involved student to student discourse. A distinct pattern appeared which consisted of turn taking between only the teacher and students that were selected by the teachers.

During reading instruction, students need to have time to talk with each other discussing the literary elements and constructing knowledge from the text to increase comprehension as Many (2002) argued. These conversations are essential for student learning as Bloome and Willis (2013) noted and are best utilized in small groups of students led by a teacher (Ediger, 2010; Jaramillo, 1996; Many, 2006; Nystrand, 2006). The following section discusses teacher led discussions using the initiate, respond and evaluate pattern as well as how teacher led discussion did not always include validation of student responses either verbally or non-verbally.

Initiation and response. During the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block the teachers were in control of the questioning. At no point during these exchanges did a student initiate the

questioning. When the students responded to the teacher initiated questions students would then respond with short phrases. After the student's response, the teacher would then resume the questioning. For example, on March 17, 2016, Ms. White was questioning students on the meaning of vocabulary words. She initiated the question, the student responded, and then she moved on to another question.

Ms. White: Next word, next word, next word is hatch. Can someone tell me the definition of the word hatch? Jack read it [pointing at Jack].

Jack: To come out of an egg.

Ms. White: To come out of an egg. [She moved her arms in a motion as if she was coming out of an egg.]

Ms. White: Can someone give me another word for hatch?

Students 2: Break

Ms. White: Break, um what can a flower do? [She did not look at this student when she repeated the word break.]

The pattern of questioning with students responding was also observed in Ms. Sax's room. Ms. Sax made eye contact with her students when they answered a question. On March 3, 2016, during shared reading, Ms. Sax began the lesson:

Ms. Sax: We've talked about different kinds of emotions. How does Emily feel now?

Britney: Maybe surprised.

Ms. Sax: Maybe surprised, how else could she be feeling? [Made eye contact with Britney. No facial expression.]

Student 2: Happy

Ms. Sax: Happy [She smiled and made eye contact with student 2]. Bianca? [Leaning in to her what she had to say.]

Bianca: Happy

Ms. Sax presented a question, repeated the students' answers, and continued questioning. The turn taking was reserved to teacher and student, not including any other members of the classroom keeping the power of the conversation in Ms. Sax's control similarly to what research (Johnstone, 2008) states.

The I-R-E pattern was apparent on April 16, 2016, during whole class/shared reading. As a student passed out worksheets, Ms. Sax had another student pass out ELA books and instructed the students to open their books. As the students opened to the correct page she asked,

Ms. Sax: What is the genre?

Student 1: It is realistic fiction.

Ms. Sax: What is realistic fiction? [Looking at Student 1 using a loud, upbeat voice]

Student 1: It is a story that can happen in the real world.

Ms. Sax: [She walked away from Student 1 as he answered.] So we read this story yesterday, does it [the text] have information in here that can happen in real life?

Students: [In unison] Yes.

Ms. Sax: So what happened in this story that happened in real life?

During this exchange, Ms. Sax pursued questioning with the same or a different student and provided a change in the tone of her voice when speaking to Student 1. Ms. Sax continued this type of questioning as she walked around the room not allowing for student learning or reflection as found in Goldenberg (1995) and Nystrand and Gamoran (1991).

When accepting student responses, the teachers often repeated the student response not providing students with the essential feedback needed to direct them in the use of metacognitive strategies as discussed in Hattie and Timperley (2007). For example, on March 17, 2016, the discussion revolved around grammar and vocabulary that had been taken and adapted by Ms. White from the teacher's manual of the packaged reading series,

Ms. White: Synonym for flippers. What would it be?

Student 1: Anything that helps you move.

Ms. White: [nodding her head in agreement] What about antonyms? What is an antonym?

Student 2: [shouting out] An opposite.

Ms. White: And an opposite is an?

Student 3: [shouting out] Antonym

Ms. White: Okay what is the antonym of flippers?

Jim: Hands and feet

In the above exchanges, Ms. White asked a question, received a response from the student, and either proceeded by repeating the student response with a gesture or proceeded with another question--not repeating the student response.

In some instances of the questioning, the teachers did not acknowledge the answer, they repeated the response, or they asked another question of a different student. For example, on March 23, 2016, during the vocabulary lesson, the I-R-E pattern was present again. Ms. White was reading out of the teacher's manual and began with the vocabulary from the current story *Pine Parky Mystery* (Field notes, March 23, 2016).

Ms. White: Here's our next word- our next word- here ya go, t-y-p-i-c-a-l [she spelled it as she wrote it on the Word Study worksheet]. Tell me what typical means. I'm quite sure you've heard that word before. I like how [Student 1] is writing what it means [she placed her hand on his shoulder]. What does typical mean? What does typical mean? [Called on Student 1]

Student 1: A very, very, very bad day.

Ms. White: She said a very, very, very bad day [with a scowl on her face and did not make eye contact with Student 1]

Ms. White: What do you think Henry? [Pointing at him.]

Henry: When something is very hard to do.

Ms. White: When something is very hard to do. What do you think [Student 3]? [She stood there with a scowl on her face]

Student 3: [Not able to hear answer.]

Ms. White: So what does typical mean? [Standing with her arms crossed.]

Student 4: To see on a clear day.

Ms. White: To see on a clear day. [Did not make eye contact with student] All right, typical, what do you think it means? Let's go to the glossary.

Students: [In unison] Read definition aloud. (Video recording, March 23, 2016)

The questioning included calling on one student and repeating what the student said along with more questioning. At no time during this discussion did Ms. White allow students to ask a question or allow them discuss with each other what they thought the words meant. This would have allowed the students to be more engaged in their learning as Michaels et al., (2008) stated in their study.

Typically the I-R-E pattern of questioning limits the initiation of the questions to the teacher. In the proceeding examples, both Ms. Sax and Ms. White initiated the questions, allowed a student to respond, provided another question, and waited for a response. The evaluation portion of the questioning was not provided.

Evaluation. Teacher responses given during the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block were insufficient in providing the students with feedback needed to help them grow as readers. Teacher feedback during instruction should be comprised of providing the student with information to assist in accomplishing a task, the progress the student has made in accomplishing the task, and information directing the student to achieving his/her goals as stated by Hattie and Timperley (2007). For example, as Ms. White had the students prepare for whole group/shared reading on April 28, 2016, she said,

Ms. White: Yesterday I introduced you to *China Town*. We're going to talk about details but I want you to think about our essential question. Why do readers read? Why reader do's [sic] read? Luke, why do you read?

Luke: I want to learn something. If a tornado comes you have to know about it.

Ms. White: Because you have to know about it. [Did not make eye contact with Luke.]

Ms. White: Scott why do readers read?

Scott: [Very quietly replied] because they want to get an education.

Ms. White: Because you want to get an education [Made eye contact with Scott]. (Video Recording, April 28, 2016)

Both Scott and Luke were below grade-level readers. Ms. White made eye contact with one student but not the other. When Luke answered the question it was not the answer Ms. White was seeking. She then moved on to Scott. After Scott provided the answer she was seeking, Ms. White made eye contact with him. Ms. White repeated the answers provided by both Scott and Luke, which according to Hattie and Timperley (2007) does not constitute effective feedback as she did not elaborate continued on to new questions.

The I-R-E pattern continued as Ms. White covered four more vocabulary words and questioned the students to determine if they understood their meanings. She asked what the synonym was for each word and what the opposite or antonym was for each word. While Ms. White did not validate each student response verbally with a “yes” or a “no,” she nodded her head in agreement and acknowledged responses by repeating what the student said. The responses given by Ms. White were a form of teacher feedback or praise that Brophy (1981), Hattie and Timperley (2007), and Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) would argue did not provide the students with any understanding of their performance or connection to the topic they were learning.

The I-R-E questioning continued on April 13, 2016, during a writing lesson that incorporated a short poem. In the discussion, Ms. White had the students read a rhyming poem in a shared reading setting (five minutes in length), asked for the definition of specific words in the poem, repeated the definitions, and then evaluated their responses with praise as discussed by Brophy (1981) but did not provide feedback that would direct the student to an understanding of learning as determined by Hattie and Timperley (2007). In the following example, Ms. White was not consistent in making eye contact with the students as she limited eye contact to the students who provided the answer she was looking for.

Ms. White: What's an explorer?

Luke: They like looking.

Ms. White: Yeah, they like looking. Michael can you help out? [Walking away from Luke and towards front of room. No eye contact with Luke]

Student 2: They go looking, explore different places.

Ms. White: They go looking at different places and cultures. Scott, what's an explorer?
[Looking directly at Scott.]

Scott: Like you're exploring.

Ms. White: Don't use the word to define the word. What does an explorer do Scott, what do they do? [Looking at Scott.]

Scott: They look for stuff.

Ms. White: Yes, they look for stuff! [She raised her voice and used an excited tone in her voice] They go to places they've never been and see stuff they've never seen.

That's what they do. Okay, we have to move on! [Again raising her voice.]

(Video Recording, April 13, 2016)

Ms. White presented a question, repeated the answer in the exchange, making eye contact and raising her voice, and continued questioning until she felt it was time to move on. Luke did not provide the correct answer and Ms. White did not make eye contact with Luke; however, she made eye contact with Student 2 after he provided an acceptable answer. This form of questioning exhibited that Ms. White was in control of the learning and discussion, not providing an opportunity for classroom talk as stated in Cullen (1998) and Michaels et al. (2008). After discussing the final word "explorer," she continued with a writing lesson without any transition. The purpose of defining the words within the rhyming poem was not explained to the students. While Ms. White did explain to the students that they would be writing a poem, no explanation was given as to what type of poem she wanted the students to write. During this writing lesson, Ms. White questioned, the students responded, but she did not evaluate the students' responses. She asked, "Did anyone pick a subject yet?" (Video recording, April 13, 2016). The students responded as a group with a "yes." Ms. White then said, "What did you pick? If I had to write a poem it would probably have to be about babies, babies, babies, babies, babies, or colors, or ABCs" (Video recording, April 13, 2016). She then went around asking individual students what their subjects were, repeating their answers.

Ms. Sax was preparing the students to read on April 6, 2016, by discussing a Venn diagram and the idea of compare and contrast. She began,

Ms. Sax: So our literary focus is compare and contrast. Who can remind me, if I'm comparing these two markers what am I trying to do? If I say I'm going to compare these two white board markers what am I trying to do?

Student 1: You're trying to see--

Ms. Sax: I like that you are on the right track with that.

Student 1: You're trying to see something about these two markers.

Ms. Sax: I'm trying to see something about these two markers--she's right on the ball.

[Made eye contact, upbeat tone in voice, and gave student a high-five.]

Ms. Sax: Exactly, [Student 2] [Student 2 spoke out of turn.] You're trying to see details.

Yes, give me a fist bump.

Ms. Sax: Can anyone tell me what this graphic organizer is? [Student 2] choose someone

to answer. [Student 2 chose Student 3] [Student 3] what kind of diagram?

Student 3: Van diagram.

Ms. Sax: Not van, I'll give you this hint -- I'll give you one more hint- it starts with a "V"

but what vowel comes next? Bianca? Remember our vowels are A, E, I, O, and

U. What vowel? [She looked at Bianca and raised the tone in her voice]

Bianca: E

Ms. Sax: Yes mam. It's a Venn diagram. [Looked at Bianca but tone of voice was flat.]

We are going to look at the differences between green and blue. Can someone tell me specifics about each marker?

Student 4: The blue marker is blue and the green marker is green.

Ms. Sax: I like it. So he told me a fact about each marker. He told me that the blue marker was blue and the green marker was green. [Looked around the room.] Choose

someone to tell me something different or the same about these two markers

[Looking at student 4.]

Student 4: Stephanie

Ms. Sax: Stephanie, can you tell me something that is the same or different about each of these markers?

Stephanie: They both called the same.

Ms. Sax: They are both white board markers [Voice raised as she emphasized both and markers]--so that is something that is the same between both. (Video recording, April 6, 2016)

In the preceding exchange, Ms. Sax did not repeat the students' responses; however, she did provide verbal acknowledgment of the response while also providing a gesture or a change in the tone of her voice. There was also an occurrence when she had another student provide a positive gesture, a "fist bump" as acknowledgement of the correct answer. The discussion continued by adding details to the Venn diagram of the two white board markers that Ms. Sax had in her hands. Ms. Sax reinforced the concepts of similarities and differences by asking, "What's another similarity? I'm looking for similarities--things that are alike" (Video recording, April 6, 2016). During this exchange Ms. Sax was in control of the discussion as she chose not to elaborate on any of the students' answers as found in Nystrand and Gamoran (1991).

When providing the evaluation portion of the I-R-E, the teachers did not provide feedback or evaluation in the same manner. Ms. White tended to use a non-verbal approach by making eye contact with the student when he/she provided her with the correct answer, while Ms. Sax used a verbal approach to feedback. Ms. Sax provided her students with what Brophy

(1981) determined was praise in many of the instances. For example, praise occurred when Ms. Sax said “I like it” or “yes mam.” The similarity between the two teachers was that they both used specific questioning with the students not providing time for discussion or reflection on the topic. Ms. Sax and Ms. White possessed the control of the discussion by calling on students, having them answer, and then moving on to the next question as Candella (1999) found to be the case for teachers using the I-R-E.

Reading Instruction: Vocabulary, Classroom Management, and Lack of Best Practices

Reading instruction in second and third grade included instruction with vocabulary from the *Trophies* series as well as learning about words the teachers felt students would benefit from by using in everyday discussions. Instructional time was interrupted and delayed in order to manage the students, their conversations, concerns, and behaviors. While the reading instruction in the classrooms did include shared reading and buddy/partner reading the lack of best practices was evident during the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block.

Vocabulary. The ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block consisted of vocabulary instruction, learning grammar, with reading that was comprised mostly of whole class/shared reading and partner/buddy reading (Table 4.1). An emphasis was placed on learning words from the *Trophies* series, being able to use academic language, along with knowledge about synonyms, antonyms, pronouns, nouns, prefixes and affixes. The teachers emphasized the importance of knowing words and developing a broad understanding of how to use words.

Ms. White focused on words from the reading series but also on words she felt the students needed to know and be able to use in their everyday language. For example, Ms. White often told the students that people would have more respect for them if they used “big” words

that were outside the normal second and third grade vocabulary. The emphasis of using “big” words was completed during the morning routine prior to the start of instruction during the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block. As Roskos and Newman (2014) argue, learning vocabulary does play an important role in learning to read. Ms. White and Ms. Sax consistently focused on learning words and encouraged their students to utilize new words in their personal vocabulary; however, it is just as important for the children to reading literature that exposes them to new words and ideas outside of what they experience in their daily lives (Roskos & Newman, 2014). Teachers need to teach vocabulary in the context the students’ daily reading to help them build their comprehension as LaBrocca and Mandel-Marrow (2016) suggest.

In the second grade classrooms and in the second/third grade classroom, helping students learn new words occurred through the use of word banks, writing down the definitions, and using the words in sentences. While Ms. Sax attempted to use movement to help her students learn words by having them act out what they felt words meant, she still relied on teaching the definition to the students through the use of paper and pencil having them write definitions and sentences. Ms. White used a vocabulary flip book on one occasion to teach pertinent vocabulary from the story the students were reading; however, she too utilized a paper and pencil method of teaching by utilizing worksheets that had to be completed in order to learn the vocabulary words. In Ms. White’s room, she taught vocabulary beyond those words found in the *Trophies* series.

While vocabulary instruction was completed as a separate lesson, grammar instruction typically took place during the “Do Now!” in Ms. White’s room. “Do Now!” activities focused on editing sentences, writing, or grammar work and occurred at the beginning of each day. Ms. Sax did not have the students complete “Do Now!” activities, instead she infused grammar instruction during vocabulary and reading instruction.

Table 4.1

ELA/Reading-Vocabulary Block

Lesson	Ms. White	Ms. Sax
1	8:30-8:40- Sight Words 8:55-9:05-Partner/Buddy Reading- Ms. White with Small Reading Group 9:05-9:30-Phonics Instruction Whole Group	8:40-9:30- Whole Class/Shared Reading
2	8:20-8:35- Do Now! – Editing 8:35-9:10- Vocabulary Instruction 9:10-9:20 – Partner/Buddy Reading- Ms. White with Small Reading Group	9:15-9:45- Vocabulary Instruction/Review
3	8:30-8:45- Do Now! – Prefixes & Suffixes 8:45-9:30- Vocabulary Instruction	8:20-9:00- Writing 9:00-9:20 –Vocabulary Instruction
4	8:25-8:40- Do Now! Contractions 8:40-9:25- Chapter Test-Whole Group Setting	8:25-8:55- Writing 8:55-9:25- Whole Group/Shared Reading
5	8:25-9:25- Writing Poetry	8:20-9:20-Do Now!- Grammar
6	8:30-8:55- Do Now!-Grammar 8:55-9:20 - Whole Group/Shared Reading	8:15-9:05- Writing 9:05-9:25- Whole Group/ Shared Reading

Instruction focused on learning definitions. Learning definitions of the vocabulary words from the stories in the *Trophies* series was prevalent and emphasized in both of the second grade classrooms during the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block. Ms. White used worksheets for most of her vocabulary instruction as Anyon (1980) and Haberman (1991, 2010) stated was a prevalent practice in high-poverty schools; however, she did include a vocabulary flipbook and also reviewed words orally with her students.

During one instructional period Ms. Sax had the students review vocabulary words and the definitions in preparation for an assessment. This activity consisted of the students acting out vocabulary words, creating a higher level of engagement for the students. The lesson began by Ms. Sax giving each student table group a vocabulary word then having the table group act out the definitions. The students were engaged during this lesson as research (Gambrell et al., 2011; Guthrie et al., 2013) states is essential during instruction. The students were able to show Ms. Sax that they knew what the words meant. Ms. Sax began,

Ms. Sax: Group five, stand up. Stand up group five. What was your word?

Group 5: [In unison] Notice

Ms. Sax: And what does notice mean?

Group 5: [In unison] Paying attention.

Ms. Sax: And you're acting out?

Group 5: [Stood up and focused on Ms. Sax.]

Ms. Sax: Thank you. Give them a clap on three, one-two-three [clapped].

Ms. Sax: Group four, stand up, stand up group four. What is your vocab word?

Group 4: [In unison] Fussed.

Ms. Sax: And what does fussed mean?

Group 4: Cry

Ms. Sax: And what does it look like?

Group 4: [Made crying noises and rubbed their eyes.]

Ms. Sax: All right give them a clap on three, one-two-three [clapped]. (Video recording March 11, 2016)

Ms. Sax continued with groups three, two, and one. She asked the students what word they had, what it meant, and what it looked like. As each group finished she consistently acknowledged their work with “a clap on three, one-two-three [clap]” (Video recording March 11, 2016) providing a sense of approval to the participants as Brophy (1981) identified as a form of praise. After the class acted out the vocabulary words, Ms. Sax prepared them for a vocabulary test. At the beginning of the test, she stated that she would read the test aloud while it was projected on the Promethean Board. The assessment was in worksheet format, comprised of sentences the students had to read requiring them to choose the correct vocabulary word to finish the sentence. The test had been taken from the reading series, *Trophies*. This was an assessment based on simple recall similar to what by Anyon (1980) and Haberman (1991, 2010) described in their work. The students seemed to understand the meaning behind the words during the activity leading up to the test; however, the results of the vocabulary assessment given directly after this activity were not shared; therefore it is not known if the activity assisted in the learning and retention of the vocabulary words.

Ms. Sax was teaching vocabulary from *The Emperor’s Egg* on March 15, 2016. She was asking students to provide their own definitions of the vocabulary words based upon a slide show with pictures representing the vocabulary words. The word Ms. Sax was asking about was the word hatch.

Ms. Sax: Based upon this picture, what do you think the word hatch means [Student 1]?

Student 1: When a bird has an egg.

Ms. Sax: I'm going to take one more. [Student 2] what does hatch mean from this picture?

Student 2: It has babies.

Ms. Sax: Let's see what it means, "To come out of an egg [reading from the Promethean board]." That's awesome. Make sure you write that down. That's the definition and now we need a sentence.

Ms. Sax: So I know our vocabulary time takes a minute so we may have to move this to this afternoon [tapping on the board] but we will get it done, we will get to that story and we're gonna have a fun time cuz it has some cute animals in it.

Ms. White and Ms. Sax both used different instructional approaches with the students but the overall goal of these lessons was to have the students learn, understand, and memorize the definitions to the vocabulary words. Opportunities for the students to use higher-order thinking skills were not included in the lessons as the students did not have time to discuss or reflect on the words or their learning as found in studies by Michaels et al. (2008).

Ms. White and Ms. Sax both used different instructional strategies but the end result was clear—learning definitions. During Ms. White's lesson on March 23, 2016, the vocabulary came from the story *Pine Park Mystery*. Ms. White began the lesson by providing a word to the students. The students' job was to tell her what they thought the word meant, look it up in the student anthology glossary to see if their "guess" was correct, and finally illustrate the word. One of the words was "clasp." Ms. White asked,

Ms. White: Can you write that and tell me what you think it means . . . what collapse [Ms. White elongated her pronunciation of the word.] means.

Luke: [raised his hand] Fall

Student 2: [clapped his hands]

Ms. White: [With a puzzled look on her face] All right then write it down, Jim?

Jim: Not sure.

Ms. White: Then write down I'm not sure. [Student 4] what do you think it means?

Student 4: When something breaks down. ? (Video recording, March 23, 2016)

Ms. White: All right, let's go to our glossary to see what clasp means. If someone finds it what page is it on? So clasp says, "a small hook that holds parts together." Give me a thumbs up when you find it. (Video recording, March 23, 2016)

The whole class read the definition repeating it twice, "a small hook that holds parts together" (Video recording, March 23, 2016). The whole class approach to teaching vocabulary that Ms. White utilized is less effective for the students as discussed in Daniels and Bizar (2005). The whole class approach coupled with the I-R-E pattern of questioning did not provide an the opportunity for engagement as Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) discussed in their study.

Ms. Sax taught a lesson from the same story, *Pine Park Mystery*, on the following day. She chose to change her normal routine for vocabulary instruction due to time limitations. Despite the change in the instructional method the end result was still learning the definitions of the vocabulary words as Ms. Sax explained:

Ms. Sax: So usually when we do the vocab presentation what we do is look at the words, write down what we think the definition is and then we see the actual one. So we can fully get through reading *Pine Park Mystery* and see the play [streamed on the

Promethean Board] we are going to verbally do it. So we are going to listen to this--it's going to be fun. Play a short vocab game. (Video recording, March 24, 2106)

Four of the six key vocabulary words were covered in this part of the lesson. Ms. Sax began, "So I'm going to say the vocab word and you're going to say it after me. Object" (Video recording, March 24, 2016).

Students: Object

Ms. Sax: What is an object? What could object mean? An object is a thing that can be seen or touched.

Alex: A basketball is an object.

Ms. Sax: Great job! What could typical mean? Raise your hand if you know what typical means?

Teacher control of the conversation was apparent during the vocabulary lesson where the I-R-E pattern of questioning resurfaced. The student had already written down the definitions to vocabulary words along with a sentence for each word prior to this lesson. Ms. Sax asked students to read or share their sentences for the vocabulary words as she showed them pictures that represented the vocabulary words. She asked:

Ms. Sax: Based upon this picture, what do you think hatch means? [She leaned in to hear Bianca]

Bianca: When a bird has an egg.

Ms. Sax: When a bird has an egg. I like it. I'll take it. One more.

In this exchange with Bianca, Ms. Sax repeated her response and then verbally praised (Brophy, 1981) her, continuing on with the questions. Ms. Sax had two more students share their sentences, then moved on to another vocabulary word. The instruction focused solely on the students having completed their sentences and knowing the definitions of the words.

The focal point of the vocabulary lessons in both Ms. White and Ms. Sax's rooms were learning the definitions of the words presented from the reading series. Neither teacher provided the students with time to have discussions around the words or discuss the meaning of the words in the context of the stories. The learning was kept specific to definitions and was directed by the teacher using initiation-respond-evaluation.

Defining important everyday terms. Ms. White and Ms. Sax felt that students needed to be able to use important terms in their everyday conversations. The terms that the teachers focused on were everyday words that they felt were important and culturally relevant as Delpit (1988) recommended for students. Terms such as guest, dilemma, morale, and miserable were just a few the teachers focused on during discussions with their students.

As morning work started in Ms. White's class on March 17, 2016, she provided directions to students. It was during those directions that Ms. White placed emphasis on learning words as in this exchange:

Ms. White: You need your "Do Now!" paper for today. I don't need to be wrote [sic] up again so let's go. All right! Turn your paper over. Make sure to put today's "Do Now" [modeling on board]. Okay we are going to start off today with ELA. Can someone tell me what ELA means?

Student: English Language Arts

Ms. White: Excellent! Excellent! [Raised voice] ELA, did everybody get a sheet of paper. I see people are still coloring. And, all right we need to stop coloring and do our do now. Let's get going. All right we made all these for St. Paddy's day. We need to lift our morale. Does anyone know what morale means? So then I won't be miserable. Does anyone know what miserable means? I love the way you raised your hand.

Student: Very unhappy.

Ms. White: Yes very unhappy. You can be miserable if you can't hear when someone is talking. Or if you are the penguin in the story and your egg cracks. I need you to edit. So you should have today's "Do Now!" by now and you should have ELA by now [writing on the paper to model] and you're going to write the word edit.

Ms. White: Someone tell me what edit means?

Jack: To fix up. (Video recording, March 17, 2016)

As Ms. White was preparing her students with directions for an upcoming lesson, she stressed the importance of learning words. Ms. White presented the students with the word "dilemma." She wanted to make sure that they knew what a dilemma was so she focused the discussion on the definition. Ms. White began the daily lesson with a "Do Now!" by asking,

Ms. White: Okay before we get started, are there any pencil dilemmas, paper dilemmas?
What do I mean by dilemmas?

Student: Problems.

Ms. White: Problems. All right I'm looking around and I don't see my papers headed right. Your name goes on the right side. Any other problems before we get started.
Any other problems?

In the brief exchange between Ms. White and her students, she reinforced the idea that learning words and knowing definitions are important.

As the students got themselves prepared for class on March 23, 2016, Ms. White began her instruction. While the objective was to discuss the vocabulary words from the student anthology, Ms. White addressed common terms while reinforcing the idea that the students needed to move away from using ‘baby words.’

Ms. White: We are going to start today with our new vocabulary from our new story. We are going to tackle these vocabulary words this morning. Tackle, tackle. It’s amazing, if you can master using other words instead of the same baby words, people will really respect you. If you know what gigantic means-

Students: [in unison] Big.

Ms. White: If you know what miserable means--

Students: [in unison] Bad

Ms. White: If you know what haze means-

Student: Foggy

Ms. White: If you know what, what about a recipe?

Jack: Tell you how to cook.

Ms. White: Steps to prepare food. Great. What is a horizon? And is it real?

Jack: It’s an imaginary line.

Ms. White: It’s an imaginary line that does what? (Video recording, March 23, 2016)

As Ms. White gave directions and prepared students for the vocabulary lesson, her exchange with the students revolved around words and learning the definitions to the words. Adding that people will “respect you” knowing new words and leaving the “baby words” behind.

The vocabulary lesson that Ms. Sax was teaching on March 24, 2016, was the same story that Ms. White had used the day before, *Pine Park Mystery*. Before the vocabulary lesson began, Ms. Sax had the students working on a worksheet based on the class field trip that had been taken to a local community college to study math and science. Ms. Sax placed a word bank on the sheet with key vocabulary words. The students were to use the word bank to help them complete the worksheet. Ms. Sax went through the word bank asking students to provide their answers to the worksheet. She read, “We are respectful to each other we are guests” (Video recording, March 24, 2016). She then talked about the word “guest” and provided a definition of the word connecting the idea of a “guest” with the “guest” teacher that was in their class the day before. During that exchange, Ms. Sax stressed the importance of learning words by simply stating the word, repeating it, and then defining it.

In both classrooms, the focus of learning words was placed on knowing the definition of the provided words. Ms. White and Ms. Sax presented words the students could use everyday discussions. Both teachers also included instruction on grammar terms presented in the *Trophies* series as students were learning about words.

Vocabulary instruction on grammar terminology. The vocabulary taught during the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block included terms such as antonym, synonym, nouns, verb tenses, prefixes, and suffixes. The teachers utilized worksheets and the *Trophies* Teacher’s Manual during these grammar lessons.

Ms. White shifted her focus from learning the definitions of words to the synonyms and antonyms for the reading series’ vocabulary words they were working on. The students provided their definition for the word but then Ms. White asked for the synonym followed by the antonym.

Ms. White: Give me an antonym for miserable, an opposite.

Student: Happy

Ms. White: Yes happy.

Student: Excited. (Video recording, March 17, 2016)

Ms. White continued asking the definition for three more words along with asking the students for the synonyms and antonyms for each word. Students continued to participate by actively answering Ms. White's questions. During this instruction, Ms. White focused the students understanding of what a synonym and antonym were as well as providing examples in relation to the vocabulary words.

The basis for the lesson on April 14, 2016, in Ms. Sax's room was using suffixes. The students were given a worksheet of twelve verbs. The words were unrelated to any of the stories they had read in the past and did not prepare them for any future stories holding them to lowered expectations as detailed in Haberman (1991, 2010). On this worksheet the students had to change the verbs from present perfect tense to past tense adding –ed and then to present progressive tense adding –ing. She began,

Ms. Sax: I'm changing a word to past tense. It's even up there [pointing to the white board] what happens to the end of the word? You add –ed. It's pretty simple we went over it yesterday. When you want to show a word, a verb, in the present tense you add –ing. So here's an example, my word is show. I want to use it in the present. I want to show you or I am presently showing you how to differentiation between past and present. (Video recording, April 14, 2016)

Ms. Sax modeled what she wanted from the students on this worksheet. The lesson continued:

Ms. Sax: Walk. I am currently walk around the room. That isn't right. Stephanie can you help me out?

Stephanie: Walking

Ms. Sax: I'm currently walking around the room.

Ms. Sax: You guys have definitely help me. How do I make it in the past tense?

Student: Helped.

After Ms. Sax had focused on the tenses of a few different verbs, she immediately handed out the worksheet for the students to complete. The lesson included knowing the definitions behind the verb tense but also included an importance of word structure using suffixes –ed and –ing.

During a whole class comprehension assessment on April 28, 2016, Ms. White focused on grammar as she was working with the students on answering questions with a complete sentence. As Ms. White was writing an answer that the students had given her on the board. She asked about capitalizing a word.

Ms. White: In scene one, Miss. Rosa, is the R capitalized in Rosa?

Students: [In unison] Yes

Ms. White: Why?

Student: [In unison] Because it's a name.

Ms. White: What kind of noun is it?

Student 1: Person

Ms. White: What is it called? This is a grammar lesson-come on people.

Jack: A proper noun.

Ms. White: Why would we capitalize the R in Rosa? Come on . . . What kind of noun is it?

Jack: A proper noun. (Video recording, April 5, 2016)

The comprehension assessment continued as Ms. White worked with the class on answering two items on the assessment in complete sentences. The comprehension assessment became more of grammar lesson ensuring that the students not only understood what a complete sentence was but what a proper noun was as well. The instruction provided during this lesson and others during this time were kept at a basic level as they were only seeking demonstration of knowledge (Bloom, 1964) through the use of worksheets, defining words, and using the words in sentences.

Classroom Management and Directions

The discourse that occurred at the start of the day was spent on managing classroom behaviors and activities. The ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block was scheduled from 8:15-9:15 am daily per Parkside's class schedules. When instructions were provided, there was no modeling to set the expectations of the lesson for the students. Time was lost to teacher/student conversations with instruction not starting until 8:45 am or later.

Ms. White used instructional time to provide directions and manage classroom behaviors with the students. As the students entered the classroom, there was not sufficient time for the teacher to attend to the students' various needs prior to starting instruction. The building schedule (Appendix H) developed by administration did not account for arrival time and meeting students' needs prior to beginning instruction.

During the first 25 minutes of class on March 11, 2016, Ms. White addressed settling down the students, procedures/record keeping, and organizing materials with statements such as “have four fingers up with your backs to your chairs,” “put your name in your book,” “I’m going to give you a marker . . . put your name in your book.” She stopped to discuss an issue between two students during breakfast. She did this in front of the whole class changing the focus on settling down for instruction to the incident from breakfast.

As the students arrived on March 23, 2016, Ms. White started the day with providing directions on how to head their papers. During the first ten minutes of class Ms. White said the following pertaining to classroom management and directions, “Still a lot of movement, not sure why but there is,” “I don’t see any of my papers heading right,” and “Name on the right side.”

Lengthy directions were provided on April 13, 2016. The focus of this lesson was to have the students write a rhyming poem. It took Ms. White 25 minutes to prepare the students before the writing even began. Ms. White stated, “I want you to think about your senses” and “today I want you to write.” She then focused on using a graphic organizer. She said,

Use this middle bubble [referring to a graphic organizer] and write an idea down. All you’re going to do is make a bubble in the middle then put a subject with two colons.

What could you write about? Snowflakes, spring, grandma, mother, granddad, baseball, worms, hockey, tennis -- whatever you want to write about. And listen don’t worry about spelling.

She continued,

So I want you to think about something you can write about. Write it down in your subject area, write it down in your subject area. Title is the last thing we do.

What do you want to write about? Something you can relate to. It can be about sports, colors, anything. Did anyone pick a subject yet? (Video recording, April 13, 2016)

Ms. White worked her way around the room to check papers and the subjects of the poems. She then called on 13 students to share their subjects. After the students had shared their subjects they began writing their poems. This activity could have been effective had Ms. White provided the students with the opportunity to have conversations with each other about their subjects for the poems they were writing as this would constitute instructional conversations as Many (2002) and Nystrand (2006) present in their findings. These directions ended at 8:55 am.

Prior to beginning their “Do Now!” for the day on April 28, 2016, Ms. White spent 15 minutes talking to the students before starting instruction. She focused on a student who had come in, sat down, and began to work; however, she soon changed her focus to managing the students’ behaviors. She said,

Less talking and more work. All right does anyone have problems--concerns that I should be aware of? Anything important? Other than that I don’t want to hear any gossip. I don’t want to hear any name calling. You gotta realize you need to settle it because I don’t want to hear it. Yes?

The classroom talk continued with Ms. White addressing needs such as using the restroom, a situation on the playground the day before, and a conversation regarding a student’s mother and the student’s hair. That particular discussion continued for four additional minutes. After she settled the students down nineteen minutes later, the discussion moved to reviewing the story *China Town* that they had read the day before. Ms. White was going to have the students start

reading but then changed her mind abruptly, saying, “And um, it was a great story and um before that I need Andrea to give everyone a sheet of paper for ‘Do Now!’ And we will staple it to yesterday’s ‘Do Now!’” It was now 8:45 am and as the students received their papers for the activity she continued,

When you do your “Do Now!” paper for today, label it correctly. All right when you get your pencil. The top left is “Do Now!” then the date and your name on the right side.

They should all be labeled like that. I got words flying up in the air [indicating students were not writing on the lines]. Make sure you write your last name. All right, let’s get going we’ve wasted so much time. (Video recording, April 28, 2016)

Ms. White continued to tell the students how to head their papers while having discussions with random students in the room about behavior. As second and third graders, these students should be able to “head” their papers. It is unclear why she would have spent instructional time on a task the children presumably should have been able to do. Ms. White said, “As soon as I see your pencils down I know that we will be ready to go” (Video recording, April 28, 2016). The class then began their morning work editing sentences from the story *China Town*. The first sentence taken from the teacher’s manual did not occur until 8:50 am.

The ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block was scheduled to start at 8:15 am. Instruction in this block did not start at 8:15 am. The conversations and directions that Ms. White had with the students began at 8:25 am at the earliest. Ms. White used instruction time to carry on conversations with students and manage student behavior.

Absence of Best Practices

Analysis of classroom discourse identified the lack of best practices. During observations, there were no instances of reading for authentic purposes as indicated important by Pressley et al. (2001) and Robb (2013), scaffolded instruction, the use of quality literature across all genres (Daniels & Bizar, 2005), differentiated instruction, accessing student prior knowledge to make connections within the text, balancing the teacher led discussion with the discussions led by the students. In spite of the fact that the teachers were able to articulate some elements of best practices there was no evidence that they used any during instruction. The teachers also appeared to have a dependence on the teacher's manual during instruction. This dependency occurred during vocabulary instruction and questioning for comprehension during shared reading. Ms. Sax and Ms. White expressed what they believed to be essential elements of reading instruction but their instruction lacked in the knowledge of how to teach the elements to the below grade-level readers. The instruction in the classrooms focused mainly on basic skills for reading. It is argued that the teachers' basic knowledge of teaching reading was demonstrated through a heavy reliance on the teacher's manual from the *Trophies* series as they worked with the students.

Discrepancy between teacher instructional knowledge and best practices. Teachers expressed what they believed to be best practices and essential components in teacher reading; however, there was an absence of best practices during classroom observations. The knowledge of best practices the teachers spoke of pertained to small group guided reading, teaching phonics, student choice, vocabulary, and high student engagement. The teachers were reflective of their own practice discussing what they would like to differently with their reading instruction.

Teachers' views of quality instruction. Ms. Sax and Ms. White conveyed the important elements of reading instruction in their interviews and what they felt was most important for

their students during reading instruction. The teachers included comprehension, vocabulary, basic sight word knowledge, phonics skills, and peeking students' interests as important to teach. Ms. Sax placed a strong emphasis on comprehension using text-to-text and text-to-self connections and when asked what is most important to her in reading instruction. She said with hesitation,

Comprehension . . . having them [students] dig deeper . . . I want to do text-to-text and text-to-self connections. Finding a way to coordinate that with the story we are reading. Being able to see those kids that struggle in reading . . . you have kids that can't read. Quality reading instruction is delving deeper into it [text] but at this stage it is also can they read. Can they read even though we talk about the tools and sounding out the word like, can they read . . . independent work in the sense of them working with the story.

(Interview, May 11, 2016)

When asked what is most important to her in reading instruction, Ms. White replied,

[Students] need to come prepared at least on sight words. At least being able to sound out words. Learn how to blend, knowing how to stretch, knowing basic strategies, and their confidence. My God, just to get them on the right reading level. Writing, vocabulary, and giving them stories they are really interested in. . . . [after being asked for clarification, she added] Writing, vocabulary, and giving them stories they are really interested in. The Harcourt stories are really good but [she stopped her reply].

(Interview, May 19, 2016)

During the discussion Ms. White began to share what she wanted to do in the classroom to help her below-grade-level readers. When asked what she would like to change about her reading instruction, she replied,

Getting them [all students] interested in what I'm doing. Getting them more interested in wanting to do and not having to do . . . finding ways to get them excited about reading, that's what I want to do. If I can get them interested in what we are doing in different ways, more hands on . . . more hand on activities getting them more involved in reading.
(Interview, May 19, 2016)

Ms. White added that she would like, "New strategies to make them like reading. You know I need some good strategies that I can use instead of these outdated things [tapping on the student anthology] . . . right now I have to do it on my own" (May 19, 2016).

The teachers expressed what they thought was good reading instruction including research-based best practices such as text-to-text and text-to-self connections, utilizing guided reading, engagement, and providing choice as Morrow and Gambrell discuss (2011), but did not include these in their instruction. While both teachers discussed components of guided reading, Ms. Sax was significantly more interested in implementing it in her room.

Guided reading. Ms. Sax and Ms. White knew that reading in small groups was more effective and better for the students for reading instruction but neither teacher felt that the students could handle small groups with center-based activities. Ms. White stated that she was not able to complete center activities while she worked with a small group of readers as the students would not stay engaged. Ms. Sax was also concerned about her students' abilities to handle center activities while she worked with small reading groups. The use of best practices as

presented by Morrow and Gambrell (2011) and Pressley et al, (2001) by these teachers during reading instruction would have afforded more opportunities for students to set goals for reading as well as allowing the teachers to maintain high expectations for their students reading achievement (Applefield et al., 2001; Colvin & Schlosser, 1997; Fosnot, 2005; Gambrell, 1996; Jaramillo, 1996).

Ms. Sax expressed that she knew that guided reading was important to the success of her students yet she was unsure how to implement and handle guided reading instruction. She also talked about how she would like to change her reading instruction for the future to help not only her below grade-level readers, but all of her readers. There was concern in her voice regarding her own instruction and how she knew it wasn't necessarily the best for the students. She said,

Doing guided reading. I understand the importance of it and I get it. I failed miserably at it, miserably at it. The . . . [pause] but I don't know. This is me, but having like [hesitated] have a course on how to get it [guided reading] started. It's not like reading is even going on in the classroom even though we have been told that guided reading has to be done in the classroom but I don't even have a sense of what that is. Guided reading isn't being done. I asked what guided reading looked like in the classroom and nobody knows so I kinda got confused . . . I need something more concrete. I just don't, I admit that I am not the only one not doing it. But I just don't know what to do . . . I just don't see how to implement it. (Interview, May 11, 2016)

An absence of best practices was evident in the use of the student anthology from the reading series for all of the students in the classroom. As the children in this study were below grade-level readers, using the on grade-level anthology during shared reading presented the students with material at a frustration level. As Fountas and Pinnell (2013) and others (Snow et al., 1998;

Robb, 2013) state it is best to use material at an instructional level for below grade level readers which would allow the teachers to provide scaffolded instruction as Morrow & Gambrell (2011) while using flexible grouping to meet each student at his/her level through the use of appropriate texts (Adler, 2002; Adler & Fisher, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 2013).

Reliance on teacher's manual. When the focus of the lesson was on vocabulary or comprehension skills was when the teachers were using the teacher's manual. This study argues that if a teacher lacks the professional preparation for teach teaching reading, there may be a stronger dependency on the teacher's manual. Furthermore, instruction that relies solely on the teacher's manual limits the potential for student learning, limiting student interaction, teacher talk, and student talk. In their study of pre-service teachers in math, Ball and Feiman-Nemser (1988) found a dependence on the teachers' manual to be due to a lack of content knowledge. During instruction the teachers were using the teacher's manual but in doing so they were not making connections to the purpose of the lesson that would help to build student learning similar to what Ball and Feimann-Nemser (1988) found. Further adding to the reliance on the teachers' manual was the fact that the particular reading program that was being used was thirteen years old did not reflect current best practices, which are essential for teaching below grade-level readers. Ms. White and Ms. Sax depended upon the teacher's manual during instruction in the ELA/Reading –Vocabulary block, using it for shared reading, comprehension instruction, and grammar and vocabulary instruction.

Reliance during comprehension instruction. The comprehension instruction during ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block revealed the teachers' heavy reliance on the manual. Working with students' comprehension of text includes questioning, making predictions, being able to self-correct as they read, and utilizing metacognitive strategies while reading as research from

the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the International Reading Association (1998) assert in their position statement. Ms. White and Ms. Sax both used forms of comprehension practices during their instruction but only when supported by the teacher's manual.

Reading to understand and looking for details was the focus of the lesson on April 28, 2016. Reading directly from the teacher's manual, Ms. White started a lesson on details by asking the students "Look at the top [pointing to the top of the page], read it. What's the topic?" (Video recording, April 28, 2016). Ms. White began to talk about the strategy of details in reading, "Read it top of page 276. [Indicating which page number students should be on in anthology.]" Students and Ms. White began to read in unison: "Details are bits of information in a story or in other writing that tell you more about something. Details help you picture what you read. They also make what you read more interesting" (Video recording, April 28, 2016). Ms. White continued,

Yesterday when we were reading *China Town*, when I was reading it to you, you really weren't paying attention to it, but you can kinda visualized what was going on in the Chinese restaurant because they gave you detail. Let's look at the. . . [she stopped talking and raised her voice]. We've been together nine months! When someone is talking or teaching it isn't very wise to start a conversation in fact it is very rude! The point that they are trying to make here is when you put details with something it is more interesting. (Video recording, April 28, 2016)

The reading of *China Town* stopped; however, instruction continued with the idea of details. She moved from the idea of details and the story to talking the class trip to the zoo the prior day. Ms. White said, "So, Tuesday when we went to the zoo-if you had to write two-three sentences about

the zoo what would you say? Add some details,” not pausing between her questions to allow students to respond. After the students discussed the zoo, the new penguin exhibit, details, Ms. White then redirected the students back to the text, *China Town*. She said, “When you gave details, it made it a little more interesting. So let’s move on. Let’s look at the bottom” [pointing to the teacher’s manual that was projected on the Promethean Board] (Video recording, April 28, 2106). All of the students began to read aloud with Ms. White from the bottom of the page. Ms. White concluded with, “I want you to read the focus skill on page 237 [in the student anthology] and answer items one and two” (Video recording, April 28, 2016). She then began moving around the room to keep students on task on their workbook on page 237. No connections were made between the essential question that she read at the beginning of the lesson, “Why do readers read?” (Video recording, April 28, 2016).

Comprehension and the understanding of the story was the focus during a lesson on March 3, 2016. *Dear Mr. Blueberry* was the story that the class was reading. The students all seemed very interested in the story and were actively engaged in the lesson. Ms. Sax was reading the story in a whole group/shared reading setting, stopping to have specific students finish reading the sentence or the paragraph. At the end of every page, she would stop and ask comprehension questions such as, “How did Emily feel now” and “What is an Island?” (Video recording, March 3, 2016). These questions were coming directly from the teacher’s manual that she had projected on the Promethean Board at the front of the room.

Ms. Sax: What was the second clue that Mr. Blueberry provided Emily to support why is
 shouldn’t, couldn’t be a whale in her pond? Let’s see [scanning the room]. Paul?
 Give it your best shot. So Paul what was the clue that he gave as to why there

should not be a whale in the pond? [Ms. Sax pointed at him, made eye contact and leaned in a bit when asking the question.]

Paul: Cuz the whale knew where he was at in the pond.

Ms. Sax: [Pointing at Paul and making eye contact] Oh [voice raised] you're actually on the opposite track. You're on the opposite track. You said part of it but you're actually going in a different trajectory or pathway than where we need to go, but thank you. The tone of her voice raised when she said "oh"] Keesha?

Keesha: Because he told her that whales don't live in um in pond.

Ms. Sax: We're missing the point, which is okay [Made direct eye contact and smiled].
Britney? You're gonna be the last one and then I'll tell you.

Britney: It because, because it's like whales do not live there they live in the oceans but he doesn't believe it's a whale.

Ms. Sax: Ok guys listen, one more whales don't get lost-- read with me, "Because whales don't get lost" [looking at the teacher's manual] so that's evidence which means clue which means if we were a detective being able figure it out. Whales don't get lost according to Mr. Blueberry so with that being said, that's why he's pretty sure it can't be a whale in there because when they are in the ocean, a pretty big body of water they know exactly where they are going. [She did not make eye contact with Britney. She stood facing the Promethean Board with her back to Britney.] (Video recording, March 3, 2016)

Ms. Sax explained to Paul that he was going in the wrong direction and provided positive “thank you” at the end of her statement. When she spoke to Keesha, she made eye contact with her and provided feedback that told Keesha she was missing the point, but she did not help direct either student to the answer. Ms. Sax then continued to read the story, *Dear Mr. Blueberry* from the teacher’s manual.

The teachers expressed what they felt were important components of reading instruction; however, the skill sets in which these components were taught were at the basic level. The teachers depended on the reading series, *Trophies* during reading instruction. As the teachers addressed language/structure, they did so on a basic level with the students. These lessons were also connected to the reading series.

Inaccurate instruction in grammar and vocabulary. On three occasions Ms. Sax and Ms. White provided inaccurate instruction to their students during vocabulary and grammar instruction. The data revealed that the teachers’ provided inaccurate explanations for language arts terms that suggests an absence of knowledge in basic English language arts concepts. These included misstatements pertaining to suffixes, prefixes, antonyms, synonyms, and the specific meanings of vocabulary words presented in the lessons. Children at risk for reading achievement are at greater risk if the instruction they receive includes inaccurate information, such as was observed in this study. The instruction was centered on vocabulary from the *Trophies* stories, the identification of a pronoun in a sentence, as well as in defining a prefix. The inaccurate instruction shows a lack of basic understanding by the teachers in vocabulary and grammar.

Vocabulary instruction on March 15, 2016, started off with Ms. Sax stating, “So if you were here yesterday, you need to open up to your vocabulary page” in the students’ notebook.

The first word was “flippers” and Ms. Sax was looking for students’ definitions of the words. She asked,

Ms. Sax: So, Neela, the first word was flippers. What do you think from your own mind, without any help; what do you think the word flippers meant?

Neela: Smooth

Ms. Sax: So you think flippers meant smooth? I like it. You’re on the right track. (Video recording, March 15, 2016)

Ms. Sax acknowledged the student’s definition with “I like it” even though the student’s answer was incorrect. Ms. Sax continued by taking student sentences for each vocabulary word. After she had covered all of the students’ definitions of the words, she projected a slideshow that consisted of pictures that represented the words, a definition for each word, and a sentence for each word.

Ms. Sax: So for those of you who were confused about what the difference between a sentence and a definition was, what I just read was the definition. An example of a sentence would have been, “I know that dolphins who are water animals are a mammal.” Who can tell me what makes a mammal different from a reptile, an amphibian? Michael your hand is raised, what?

Michael: They all have fur.

Ms. Sax: Yes they all have a type of fur like hair about them. But so I know that a dolphin is type of mammal that uses its flippers to swim in the ocean. So guys that is the difference between a definition and a sentence. A definition is straight up facts

where a sentence is your own construct your own words in using that vocabulary in a way that you would understand it better. (Video recording, March 15, 2016)

This exchange with her students misinformed them about the difference between a definition and a sentence. Definitions are formed with sentences and both definitions and sentences can be factual. As the lesson continued, Ms. Sax asked the students to provide a sentence using vocabulary words. Britney had supplied Ms. Sax with the sentence, “I saw the bird hatch” (Video recording, March 15, 2016).

Ms. Sax: Oh real quick, who’s the subject of the sentence? Who is the subject of the sentence?

Student 1: The bird

Ms. Sax: The bird . . . oh, Mrs. Larkins, I think I messed it up. What is the subject of the sentence? Is it “I”.

Mrs. Larkins: The subject would be “I.”

Ms. Sax: What kind of article is the word “I”? It’s a type of noun but what type of noun is I, Britney?

Britney: A proper noun?

Ms. Sax: No, not a proper noun. Britney is a proper noun, Student 3?

Student 3: A pronoun

Ms. Sax: A pronoun, thank you. So I is the subject, what is the verb? I saw a bird hatch, what did I do?

Students: [in unison] saw a bird hatch.

Ms. Saw: I don't want the whole sentence, what did I do?

Students: [in unison] saw (Video recording, March 15, 2016)

Ms. Sax was reinforcing knowing the difference between a proper noun and a pronoun; however she began her initial question identifying the word I as an article. That statement provided her students with inaccurate information regarding articles, pronouns, and nouns.

While Ms. White was providing instruction on vocabulary, she shifted her focus to the synonyms and antonyms for the words the students were working on. Ms. White began asking for synonyms and antonyms for vocabulary words from the story the class had just finished. Ms. White's instruction included acknowledging inaccurate student responses as correct responses.

Ms. White began with,

Ms. White: What is the definition for miserable?

Student 1: Sad

Ms. White: If miserable means sad, give me a synonym for miserable. Synonyms mean the same.

Jack: Mad

Ms. White: Yes mad, anyone else? Give me another word for miserable.

Students: [shouting out] upset, angry

Ms. White: Yes, anything else?

Students: [shouting out] unhappy

Ms. White: Great. Another word for miserable. The dog lost his bone and was miserable.

Student 2: The dog lost his bone and was sad.

Ms. White: Give me an antonym. Antonyms are?

Students: [In unison] Opposites

Ms. White: And opposites are?

Students: [In unison] Antonyms

Ms. White: Give me an antonym for miserable. What's the opposite of miserable? Henry?

Henry: Disappointed

Ms. White: No that's an antonym, no I mean synonym. (Video recording, March 17, 2016)

Ms. White accepted "mad" a synonym for the word miserable, which was not accurate. This then led the class to shout out incorrect answers and yet Ms. White accepted those answers as well. When Henry provided "disappointed" to Ms. White's request for an antonym she acknowledged his answer as a synonym, which was incorrect.

During a "Do Now!" activity Ms. White had written, "What is a prefix? Give an example of a prefix" (Video recording, March 23, 2016) on the white board. The students were to answer the question on paper and provide an example of a word with a prefix. Ms. White said, "First you have to tell me what it is and give me an example. You have one minute." The lesson continued with the following question from Ms. White, "Is a prefix a word or a sound?" (Video recording, March 23, 2016). Ms. White called on Henry. Henry looked puzzled and shrugged his shoulders. Ms. White continued,

Ms. White: Is pre a word? Is un a word?

Students: [In unison] No!

Ms. Sax: You need to remember that a prefix is a sound and it comes before a word. What kind of word?

Students: [In unison] A root word!” (Video recording, March 23, 2016).

There was no further explanation of a prefix being a word or a sound added before a root word, which was inaccurate information. She did not review any of the students’ answers from the “Do Now” activity. While the information provided to the students on prefixes was not accurate the students did understand what the prefixes themselves meant. They were able to use pre and un accurately in their discussions.

In conclusion, the classroom instruction during the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block was essentially presented at the simplest level indicating that the teachers did not believe that these students could handle a high level of instruction as Anyon (1980) and Haberman (1991, 2010) as prevalent practice in high- poverty urban areas. The use of I-R-E did not allow for students to develop higher-order thinking skills through the sharing of ideas or reflection. Through the restructuring of the classroom conversations to include the students would have led to stronger student engagement and learning. Similarly the discourse did not support the idea that reading is a social process where conversations should be taking place to increase comprehension. When higher-order thinking is occurring, students are talking, and connections are being made – students are learning.

The students in these classrooms did not have the experiences that allowed for social interaction as examined by Bloome (1985) or to increase their comprehension through the use of

talk. Comprehension is the purpose for reading (Strickland & Townsend, 2010) and discourse serves to promote comprehension (Fisher & Larkin, 2008; Jaramillo, 1996). Guided reading is a method that would have facilitated student learning through social interactions (Cullen, 1998). Without the opportunity for the second and third graders to talk about stories, they did not have the opportunities to explore meanings of their texts or monitor their own understandings of the stories read improving comprehension as determined by Johnson (2004). The classroom teachers needed to model the use of purposeful talk where the students could learn to problem solve in relation to the text they had read as Allington (2002) discussed as a best practice. If provided the opportunity to have these conversations it would have assisted in building the comprehension skills of the students in the study.

Chapter 5: Perceptions: Teachers' of Students as Readers and Students' as Readers Themselves

In order to understand how the teachers perceived their students as readers and how the students perceived themselves as readers, classroom discourse, interview data, and survey data were analyzed. With regard to perceptions, the findings reveal that (a) the different expectations teachers set for their below grade-level readers and their higher readers similar to what others have found (Cazden et al, 1972; Godley et al, 2006; McKown & Weinstein, 2008), (b) the students' self-perceptions as readers did not match their reading abilities, and (c) the adults in their lives had an influence on the below grade-level readers' perceptions. However, another finding emerged that is relevant to the question of perceptions, which indicates that the teachers may have held low efficacy with regard to their abilities to teach reading to their below-grade level readers. This last finding is presented first as it has bearing on the discussion of perceptions.

Teachers' Self-Efficacy for Teaching Reading

While this study did not examine teacher self-efficacy specifically there is evidence that the teachers may have had low self-efficacy for teaching reading. First, the teachers expressed their lack of knowledge in teaching reading; for example, Ms. Sax, a first year teacher, said that she was not sure how to even get guided reading started. She saw this as a failure, which can affect efficacy. Ms. Sax,

Doing guided reading. I understand the importance of it and I get it. I failed miserably at it, miserably at it. The . . . [pause] but I don't know. This is me, but having like [hesitated] have a course on how to get it [guided reading] started.

A low sense of self-efficacy for these teachers serves as an example of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2007) argument that teacher self-efficacy beliefs can validate a teacher's capability to teach or the incapacity to teach. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) found that low self-efficacy was not related to years of experience. It would seem to be the case for the teachers in this study as only one was in her first year of teaching; the other two were not (one was in her 5th year and the other in her 18th)

In addition, analysis of interview data revealed that all three teachers used blaming language such as "they don't come to school ready to learn," "give up they get frustrated," and "kids aren't achieving in other areas because they can't read," which Tschannen-Moran and Johnson (2011) and Wheatley (2002) argue is evidence of low teacher self-efficacy. The teachers also expressed that it was the below grade-level readers who were the behavior problems and not the higher readers in the classrooms and that the below grade-level readers did not retain the information taught as discussed in Nystrand and Gamaron (1991). The sense of low self-efficacy by the teachers was further evidenced through the use of instructional strategies that Haberman (1991, 2010). In this study evidence of activities during instructional time were similar to those Haberman (1991, 2010) identified as core functions in an urban school: simple recall questioning, attention to seatwork ("Do Now" activities), and settling disputes, often observed during instructional time.

Teachers' Expectations Differed for their Below Grade-Level Readers

The expectations set for the below grade-level readers were lower than the expectations set for the higher readers in the classrooms. Negative comments regarding the below-grade level readers (Table 5.1) in second and third grade were made while teachers had more positive comments and thoughts about the higher readers (Table 5.2). As the teachers discussed both the below grade-level readers and the high readers reflections were made about their preparation and support they received in the school administration. The comments regarding the students from the three teachers fit into five categories for both the below grade-level readers. The categories that emerged were: behavior, foundational skills, self-efficacy and attitude, support, motivation, and ability.

Perceptions of the below grade level readers. The teachers in this study held lowered expectations for their below grade-level readers, sharing their expectations during the interviews. Ms. White shared comments that pertained to the preparation of the below grade-level readers their behavior, foundational skills and self-efficacy/attitude while her comments about the higher readers were mostly based on their performance or ability to perform; for example, “don’t come to school ready to learn,” “don’t absorb as much,” and “you can talk to them [higher readers].” Ms. Sax’s comments were negative regarding her below grade-level readers, focusing mainly on student lack of ability, low motivation, and low self-efficacy/attitude as research has identified as a practice that teachers with low self-efficacy possess as stated by Tschannen-Moran and Johnson (2011) and Wheatley (2002) in their research. Her comments framed below grade-level readers as those who “can’t,” “won’t,” or “don’t” read, those who have no value, and are uncaring about their education focusing on the students’ lack of performance in the classroom as found the study by Diamond et al., (2004). Ms. Sax’s comments about her higher readers in her

Table 5.1

Teacher Perspective of Below Grade-Level Readers

Category	Teacher Comments
Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “hide behind anger” (White) • “acting out” (White) • “they won’t settle down” (Sax) • “my blurters and ones off task” (Sunny)
Foundational Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “don’t come to school ready to learn” (White) • “not receiving the background” (White) • “not even a foundation” (Sax) • “great reading deficit” (Sunny) • “struggle with decoding words” (Sunny) • “lack some of the basic sounds” (Sunny)
Self-Efficacy and Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “someone has told them . . . they are stupid” (White) • “give up they get frustrated” (White) • “confidence is low” (White) • “put their heads down and go to sleep” (White) • “just let me sleep” (Sax) • “lack of confidence” (Sax) • “lower level kids are like peace out I’m done” (Sax) • “they have a chip on their shoulder” (Sax) • “they know they can’t do it” (Sax) • “unwilling to put forth any effort” (Sunny)
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “they don’t have the support” (White) • “they’re in second grade and I don’t relate to them” (Sax) • “I can’t with the lower readers” (Sax)
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “don’t want to read” (Sax) • “have no value” (Sax) • “realize they can’t read and give up” (Sax) • “don’t try . . . they don’t try here” (Sax) • “they won’t even try to discover”(Sax) • “they don’t care. . . they basically don’t care” (Sax) • “they aren’t vested in their learning” (Sax) • “could have cared less” (Sax) • “they didn’t care at all” (Sax) • “will just quit on the higher reader” (Sax)
Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “they can’t read” (Sax)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “there is no hope to learn to read” (Sax) • “can’t read it” (Sax) • “I can’t do this, I’m not even gonna try” (Sax) • “because they can’t read” (Sax) • “they are so scattered” (Sax) • “they don’t try in reading” (Sax) • “kids that can’t read” (Sax) • many of these kids aren’t getting those [ah-ha] moments” (Sax) • “kids aren’t achieving in other areas because they can’t read” (Sax) • “focus level is lower” (Sunny)
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classroom focused on ability, self-efficacy/attitude, and behavior. Some examples are they, “work” in class, “read” in class, are “doing well,” and that she “can trust . . . to read.” Ms. Sunny comments for the below grade-level readers focused mainly on their foundational skills in reading and ability, “focus level is lower” and “lack some of the basic sounds.

Teachers’ negative opinions regarding below grade-level readers. Opinions of below grade-level readers were negative and included low expectations in reading as Haberman (1991) and others (Ford & Quinn, 2010; Diamond et al., 2004) suggest. As the teachers spoke about their below grade-level readers the focus of their discussions differed. A lack of ability, motivation, and foundational skills seemed to be the focus of Ms. Sax’s comments about her below-grade level readers. The comments made about her below-grade level readers seem to focus mainly on their ability levels and their motivation to read with a lesser focus on behavior and their self-efficacy/attitude. Providing evidence that Ms. Sax’s attitudes towards her students were impacting their willingness and motivation within the classrooms as discussed in Jussim and Harber (2005) as well as others (Jussim, 1989; Payne, 1994). A lack of confidence and poor behavior were Ms. White’s main focus as she discussed her below grade-level readers similarly to the research (Kim & Lorschach, 2005) describing students with low self-efficacy as those who

act out during class. A lack of foundational skills in reading was Ms. Sunny's main focus as she discussed her below grade-level readers.

Lack of ability leads to lack of motivation with the below grade-level readers. Low ability levels and a lack of motivation was a main concern regarding below-grade level readers (Table 5.1). Ms. Sax's responses about her below grade-level readers were concerning as they contained the following phrases: "can't read," "don't try," "don't know," "won't try," and "don't care." As Ms. Sax discussed her below grade-level readers she stated,

I personally find it very sad. It's not that they don't want to read. It's that they acknowledge that they can't read. There is no hope to learn to read. It's hard- they haveno value, but they also don't . . . the value of discovering. (Interview, March 15, 2016)

Being surprised by that response, I asked, "So is there no hope? The students don't show hope?" She replied,

A lot of times they try--they like say let me read this to you and then they start and realize they can't read it and give up . . . You know they want to in a sense but they don't try, they don't try here. I know that's really bad to say but you give them a book at their reading level and then maybe they'll try, or maybe just look at the pages. You'll be like 'read me the title' and then they can't read the title and it's on their grade level. But they won't even try. I don't want to say that they don't care, that just sounds mean but in a sense . . . they basically don't care. They aren't vested in their learning. (Interview, March 15, 2016)

As Ms. Sax continued she commented that she tried to get the below grade-level readers to read science with the hope that they would like to read since the topic was science, “science- they are like ‘oh cool!’” then they realize that they can’t read it and then what? What am I supposed to do? I can’t do this, I’m not even gonna try” (Interview, March 15, 2016). Ms. Sax seemed to be frustrated with her below grade-level readers focusing strongly on what they were unable to do and not what they could do (Ford & Quinn, 2010; Diamond et al., 2004).

Teachers believed that below grade-level readers had a low sense of self-efficacy and poor attitudes. The teachers believed that the below grade-level readers had a low sense of self-efficacy and poor attitudes regarding reading. Some of the comments regarding below grade-level readers included, “they know they can’t do it,” they “put their head down and go to sleep,” and they “give up, they get frustrated” (Teacher interviews, 2016). As Kim & Lorschbach (2005) suggest in their study, students who possess a low sense of self-efficacy will present avoidance behaviors when they feel they are unable to complete a task with a positive outcome.

Ms. Sax focused mainly on confidence level and attitudes within the classroom when asked about her below-grade level readers and their most common struggle. She said,

What is the common struggle? The lack of confidence. If I really had to base it down, I mean that’s it, lack of confidence. I when there is that small bit of confidence they try harder. And I think they don’t try in reading. (Interview, March 15, 2016)

Ms. Sax then went on to discuss how she tries to get the below-grade level readers excited about reading by pairing them up with the higher readers to do partner reading in science. She said,

I can have that with two higher readers, but I can't with lower readers . . . there is [sic] times when the lower reader will just quite on the higher reader . . . they aren't doing anything, they aren't contributing to this. (Interview, March 15, 2016)

She continued in the same interview stating that the higher readers even believe the below-grade level readers are “useless” and the “lower level kids are like peace out I'm done. I want to go home.” Ms. Sax's comments regarding how her higher readers speak about the lower readers indicate a lack of community building within her classroom indicating that the students are not able to handle the student-to-student interactions as found in works by Bloome (1985) and Gee and Green (1998).

Another time Ms. Sax began to talk specifically about one of her below-grade level readers, Bianca. She focused on Bianca's confidence level and what happens when she leaves the school and goes home. Ms. Sax stated that she had a discussion with Bianca about her reading, Ms. Sax stated,

Her siblings ridicule her at home and call her stupid which creates a mental block of even wanting to try to do it [read] . . . we build their confidence here and they are reading, yet they are not that proficient and they home and then they have a chip on their shoulder . . . then they go home and it overrides and brings them down. (Interview, May 11, 2016)

When discussing her below grade-level readers further, Ms. Sax stated that her readers are “unwilling to put forth any effort.” Ms. White discussed her below grade-level readers and how “their confidence is low, they shy away, they feel bad . . . they are shy and withdrawn” (Interview, February 10, 2016). She mentioned that her below grade-level readers will “give up,

they give up, their confidence is low. Or they put their heads down and go to sleep” (Interview, February 10, 2016), exhibiting avoidance behaviors as presented in research by Kim and Lorschach (2005). Ms. White continued discussing the lack of “confidence with reading” (Interview, May 19, 2016) regarding her below grade-level readers. She said that it is about “getting their confidence up, getting it up, they are so low . . . someone has told them, they are stupid” (Interview, May 19, 2016).

Below grade-level readers and behavior. Behavior was a concern when teachers discussed below grade-level readers. Ms. Sax focused on how her below grade-level readers were “scattered” (Interview, March 15, 2016). Ms. White mentioned how her readers tend to “show out” because they are not able to read (Interview, February, 10, 2016). Ms. Sunny mentioned that her readers are unable to stay on task (Interview, February, 2016). As the teachers described the students, the avoidance behaviors as described by Kim & Lorschach (2005) became evident to the researcher.

Ms. Sax went into detail about her lower level learners in her room during lessons. During this discussion Ms. Sax revealed her low sense of self-efficacy when she indicated that she was not having fun and she wanted to cry. She said,

With like the lower level learners, I try to make it fun for the get go but then they are so scattered that it’s not fun -- it is just a chaotic mess. They might be having fun but it’s not fun for me . . . I just wanna cry. And then I just need them to sit down. The necessary, it can actually be fun. Like writing, writing with vocabulary, something with vocabulary. The higher level learners get so tired of the lower level learners. We’ve tried drawing the vocab word, acting out the vocab word and then the next day it’s like

“What is this vocab word?” It’s like trying to get them to put things in ABC order, they don’t understand what ABC order is. (Interview, March 15, 2016)

When Ms. White discussed her below grade-level readers, she stated,

They are struggling and it’s a combative fight all the time. The ones who don’t [read on grade level], they give up -- they get frustrated. You can tell that they can’t tell the difference between b and d. They want it, they want to be in the norm but they shy away and then there is behavior. Their reading level being so low they hide behind the anger. It is so overwhelming because they are acting out. They are acting out and it is so hard with instruction because I find out when I do centers with this group, they all copy one another unless we do collage. (Interview, February 10, 2016)

Ms. White continued to focus on the below grade-level readers behavior which is an indicator that the students possess a low sense of self-efficacy and are afraid of the outcome during reading as determined in Kim and Lorschbach (2005).

A lack of foundational skills in below grade-level readers. The lack of foundational skills in reading with the below grade-level was a concern voiced by all three teachers. Concerns from the teachers included not coming “to school ready to learn,” “can the read?” and they “struggle with decoding words” (Interviews, 2016). Each teacher spoke to specific skills that their below grade-level readers lacked.

Ms. White spoke about the vocabulary that the below grade-level readers in her room lacked. She shared, “They really need vocabulary and you know the conversation.” The statement she made about vocabulary was somewhat reflected in her classroom instruction as

vocabulary was included in her lessons on March 11, 2016, March 17, 2016, and March 27, 2016. Ms. White continued talking about her below grade-level readers she added,

Phonemes, knowing sounds, knowing words, knowing the sound that the letters make, blending them. Sounding out and tracking . . . I am finding myself in September having to go back and not forward because they aren't there . . . you got kids who can't cut with scissors . . . kindergarten needs to be mandatory" (Interview, February 10, 2016).

She continued,

It is so sad that they don't come to school ready to learn. Every year it gets harder and harder for them and it seems to me that for them it has become the norm. Kids are not receiving the background that they need to become successful in school . . . they are coming in more and more severely not knowing how to read. I have so many kids in my room that are on a Kindergarten level. (Interview, February, 10, 2016)

Ms. White talked about the students, as second and third graders not knowing their sight words saying that they need to "come to school prepared at least on the sight words" (Interview, May, 19, 2016). In her discussion, Ms. White indicated that her students were not prepared when they arrived at school as research (Au & Raphael, 2000; Auwarter, 2008; Huges & Kwok, 2007) discussed as a connection to the student's low socio-economic status.

Although Ms. Sax did not go into detail as to what foundational skills were lacking she did mention sounding out, discovery, and comprehension. Ms. Sax said, "Can they [below grade-level readers] read- even though we talk about the tools and sounding out the words- like can they read? Like what I see, they can't do the basic foundation of it" (Interview, March, 15, 2016). She added, "Quality reading instruction is delving deeper into it [reading] but at this

stage it is also just can they read?” (Interview, March 15, 2016) referring to reading itself being a foundational skill. Ms. Sax continued with her discussion of the lack of foundation in reading.

She said,

They should already be at a point that they’re not in reading. It’s like the ones that are on grade level are discovering. Here there’s not even a foundation. So the ones below don’t have the foundation (pause) there’s no help . . . it’s just so overwhelming. (Interview, March, 15, 2016)

She added:

I want to do more fun stuff but there is a need for foundation, that’s my personal belief. And the foundation needs to be set before the fun stuff. I know they [administration] are like make it fun for the students, but I believe in the foundation. I just don’t understand why it has to be so stimulating. (Interview, March, 15, 2016)

Ms. Sax focused on the students’ lack of foundational skills as to why she was not able to reach these students; however, research (Colvin & Schlosser, 1997) indicates that teachers can positively influence their students’ literacy behavior by believing in their students.

Even though this was Ms. Sunny’s first year in the lower elementary teaching in an inclusive classroom, she was able to recognize and discuss her concerns regarding the below grade-level readers. Ms. Sunny stated, “Many of the students entered third grade with a great reading deficit” (Interview, March 2016). She continued stating, “My below grade-level readers still struggle with decoding words and still lack some of the basic sounds. A couple of them are unable to . . . interpret and repeat the same single vowel sounds” (Interview, March 2016). She continued, “My struggling readers are generally my blurters and ones off task. The focus level is

lower. Ms. Sunny, just as Ms. White and Ms. Sax had indicated, focused on what their students were unable to complete in the classroom (Anyon, 1980; Diamond et al., 2004; Ford & Quinn, 2010).

Teacher perceptions of higher readers. In contrast to their views of the below grade-level readers, comments about the children who are on or above grade level were positive (Table 5.2). Ms. White perceived that her higher readers possessed a stronger ability to talk and express themselves better than her below grade level readers. Ms. Sax perceived that her higher level readers had the ability; therefore, the expectations that she set were higher (Jussim, 1989). When discussing the higher readers, teachers used positive phrases such as “you can talk to them,” “foundation is already built,” and “they absorb it” (Interviews, 2016). Comments for the higher readers related to the higher ability of these students and their desire to read. The comments regarding the students from the three teachers fit into the same five categories as the below grade-level readers: behavior, foundational skills, self-efficacy and attitude, support, motivation, and finally ability.

Teachers believed that higher readers had a higher sense of self-efficacy. The higher readers in the classrooms had greater ability levels in reading and a stronger sense of self-efficacy according to the teacher. The teachers spoke positively of the higher readers. With the higher expectations that were held and expressed by these teachers, the higher readers continued to excel and maintain a higher sense of motivation (Bandura, 1993; Jussim 1989). As Ms. Sax discussed her higher readers her demeanor became light and happy. When asked to talk about higher-level readers, Ms. White’s face lit up, she sat up in her chair, and became animated as she began to use her hands more as she talked. Ms. Sunny was very enthusiastic when talking about her higher-level readers as the tone of her voice rose with excitement.

Ms. Sax had a smile on her face as she began to speak about her higher readers but quickly, her discussion moved back to the below grade-level readers. She commented,

High-level readers are more willing, they are just willing to. The higher ones, it is just easier for them to work. The foundation is already built, they can work. The kids that are high, the ones that are doing well, they have been taught . . . They [higher readers] are self-entitled. Some of them are helpful but they have no patience with the lower level readers. (Interview, March 15, 2016)

Table 5.2

Teacher Perspective of Higher Readers

Categories	Teacher Comments
Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “focus through anything and read” (Sunny) • “I can trust that they are going to read . . . “ (Sax) • “they want to help” (Sax) • “more willing” (Sax)
Foundational Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “build on their knowledge” (White) • “foundation is already built, they can work”(Sax)
Self-Efficacy and Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “they are self-entitled” (Sax) • “some of them are helpful” (Sax) • “successful readers stumble over words but aren’t afraid to ask for help” (Sunny)
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “they have been taught” (Sax)
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trying to get their hands on the book that I’m reading aloud” (Sunny)
Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “you can talk to them” (White) • “they remember” (White) • “they understand” (White) • “they are the ‘smart kids’ and supposedly they know” (White) • “see them making connections” (White)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “They know, they absorb it. They know how to stretch, they know how to blend” (White) • “some will hear the word once and then they know that word for the rest of the year” (Sax) • “the ones that are doing well” (Sax) • “just easier for them to work” (Sax) • “read anything” (Sunny) • “become absorbed into a book” (Sunny)
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She also added “The kids that are high, the ones that are doing well, they have been taught, they look at others [struggling readers] like you’re kind of useless” (Interview, March 15, 2016). This statement was disturbing; indicating that not only did the teachers have lower expectations for the below grade-level readers but so did their peers. This suggests that Ms. Sax had not developed a community of learners within her classroom built on the premise that everyone can read, learn, and grow as suggested in Ladson-Billings (2009) study. Ms. Sax added that her higher-level readers help around the classroom and she can “employ them as a helper . . .” (Interview, March 15, 2016). She continued,

I use the readers as helpers, like let’s say, I did it last time with one of my higher-level readers. I had them take a lower level reader and read the test to them, because I can trust that they are going to read to them, and like I know-no matter how many issues they all have, they can be super helpful. They are those types of kids, they want to help.

(Interview, March 15, 2016)

Higher ability levels were the focus of discussion around Ms. White’s higher readers. Her response indicated that she is able to see the students making connections while they were reading. Ms. White said,

Ahh! [Excitement in her voice] It's a beautiful thing! You can talk to them and they remember. You can talk about Christopher Columbus and how he crossed the Atlantic and they understand. Then you can build on their knowledge because they are the 'smart kids' and supposedly they know. You tell them things and you can see them going 'ahhhhhh.' You can see them making the connections. (Interview, February 10, 2016)

She was excited that during the prior week's vocabulary lesson she gave the students the word "boasting" and that they were using it during the current week in their classroom dialogue. Ms. White said with a big smile, "Last week I gave them the word boasting and this week they are ramming that word into the ground. 'Oh you are boasting, you're boasting!'" (Interview, February, 10, 2016). When asked if her students all learn the same way, Ms. White focused on her high readers and their abilities to use their foundational skills stating, "The ones that are on grade-level, they know, they absorb it. They know how to stretch, they know how to blend" (Interview, February, 10, 2016). Ms. White was holding her higher readers to a different standard than her below grade-level readers (Jussim, 1989; Payne, 1994).

Ms. Sunny felt that her higher readers had stronger reading abilities, greater motivation, and better self/efficacies and attitudes. Her discussion of the higher readers focused on confidence, being able to decode and wanting to decode, wanting to learn new words, and using prosody when reading. She said,

My successful readers are always trying to get their hand on the book that I'm reading aloud to the class because they can't wait to see what's next. They want to read anything. They understand that even a great book can be boring if you read it that way, as well as a dull book can become great if you use expression. When my successful readers stumble

over words they aren't afraid to ask for help and actually prefer to know how to say the word. (Interview, March, 2016)

Lowered expectations for their students in reading were seen through the teacher instruction and the continued referencing to how students needed to sound words out, "couldn't read" and showed "no hope." As these teachers were teaching reading, they exhibited a strong focus on words. Words-the definitions of words, using words in their own sentences, and understanding how words can change with prefixes and suffixes was the focus of reading in these classrooms.

This study argues that the teachers' may have held low efficacies for teaching reading and held lower expectations for their students' learning to read. If the teachers at Parkside had perceived students to be high performing, the expectations held for them would be higher as Jussim (1989) argues. It is interesting to note that in spite of the fact that all of the students in the classrooms observed were low-SES, the teachers did not hold low expectations for all, which is contrary to what has been presented in the literature (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008; Cazden et al., 1972; Diamond et al., 2004; Godley, Sweetland, Wheeler, Minnici, & Carpenter, 2006; Harvey & Slatin, 1975; Ford & Quinn, 2010; McKown & Weinstein, 2008). However, they did hold lower expectations for some of the children in their classrooms, which seemed to be more related to the children's below grade-level performance in reading similar to Jussim and Harber's (2005) work pertaining to expectations held by teachers and student achievement.

In addition, this study argues that teacher expectations play a role in what the students know and what they relate to as being good readers. Jussim (1989) determined that there is a relation between the expectations that teachers hold for students and the students' level of achievement. The higher the expectations for learning will then increase the students' self-

efficacy and achievement (Jussim, 1989). This study supports Jussim and Harber's (2005) finding that teachers' expectations relate to student performance. While the teachers never verbally expressed low expectations for their students they were implied through the instruction that relied on simple recall questioning and focus on low level skills (such as decoding). Teachers who possess a stronger sense of self-efficacy are more capable of providing instructional strategies that keep students engaged, classroom management under control (Johnson, 2010) and improve literacy achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson 2011). Teachers in the urban school have low expectations for their student; unfortunately these students, even at the young age of seven and eight, do not always believe in themselves as readers. The students have presented mixed beliefs about themselves as readers.

Students' Self-Perceptions as Readers

This study argues that the reading instruction in the classroom along with the adult influences in their lives led to the students' understandings of what it means to be a good reader. Through the students' survey responses, their interviews, and during observations, the students revealed what reading was to them and why they felt they were good readers.

Students' ideas about reading mirrored what instruction looked like in the classroom. The second and third graders' ideas of reading mirrored the instruction they received in the classroom. Despite the lack of best practices in reading being used in the classrooms and their low reading levels coupled with their negative (i.e., reading is decoding) and positive (i.e., adults value reading) views of reading these students still valued reading. For example the teachers encouraged the students to sound words out while reading along with reading at home as what makes a good reader which were echoed by the children.

Students had a false sense of their reading abilities. Students indicated that they were good readers even though they were below grade-level. All ten of the children were given the reading survey (Table 5.3) evaluating their self-concepts as a readers. Five of the readers (Luke, Henry, Britney, TC, and Marie) presented low self-concepts as readers, while the remaining five students (Bianca, Scott, Jim, Stephanie, and Jack) presented high self-concepts as a readers.

Table 5.3

Self-concepts as Readers²

Student Name, Grade, & Response										
Self-concept Item Number	Bianca (2)	Scott (2)	Jim (2)	Luke (2)	Henry (2)	Britney (2)	Stephanie (2)	Marie (2)	TC (3)	Jack (3)
1 (what friends think)	3	4	4	2	2	1	4	1	2	4
3 (ability compared to friends)	3	4	4	2	2	1	4	1	1	4
5 (decoding new words)	1	1	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	4
7 (comprehension-)	3	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	4

² Scores range from the lowest (1) to the highest (4) on both sections of the survey.

reading alone)										
9 (self- concept)	3	2	4	2	3	2	3	2	4	4
11 (peers’ opinions)	2	3	4	3	2	4	1	4	2	1
13 (using text for thinking)	4	3	1	3	3	3	4	3	4	4
15 (reading is easy or difficult)	4	4	1	2	3	1	4	2	3	4
17 (confiden ce in reading)	4	4	4	2	4	2	4	4	3	4
19 (reading aloud)	4	4	4	2	3	3	3	2	2	4

Bianca, Henry, Jack, Jim, Luke, Scott, Stephanie, and TC described themselves as good readers during their interviews, when in fact their reading abilities as indicated by their DRA scores were below grade level. On the survey, Jack, Jim, and TC described themselves as “very good readers,” and Bianca, Henry and Stephanie indicated that they were “good readers” when answering item 9. Luke, Britney, and Marie indicated that they were only “OK readers” (item 9). Marie answered with “okay” and Britney said “a little” when asked during interviews if they

were good readers. When comparing the students' self-perceptions, their interview responses, and their actual reading levels, there was a mismatch.

Bianca. Bianca stated during her interview that “yes” she was a good reader and responded to item 9 on the survey that she was a “good reader” yet her reading level was at a DRA 4 or a kindergarten level. In spite of the fact that Bianca was reading eight levels below her grade level, she indicated a positive self-concept and confidence as a reader (items 5 and 7). She indicated this positive self-concept further during the interview as she stated that she could “read better than . . . my brudder.”

Henry. Henry responded “yes” that he was a good reader during the interview. He indicated that he was a “good reader” when responding to item 9 on the survey while reading at a first grade level (DRA 14). Henry reinforced his self-confidence as a reader as he felt that he could talk about his ideas in small reading groups as well as when reading aloud in front of the class (items 17 and 19). In addition to his belief that he was a good reader reading was “kind of easy for him” (item 15) while only understanding “some of what I [he] reads” (item 7).

Jim. Jim answered “yes” he was a good reader while reading at a first grade level (DRA 10). As a reader who was five levels behind grade level, Jim believed that he was a “very good reader,” even when reading aloud (items 9 and 19). He indicated his positive self-concept as a reader during the interview when he said that he reads to his “little brother” at home (Interview, February 18, 2016). Jim continued to reinforce his positive self-concept as a reader as he indicated that he can “always talk” about his ideas while in small group (item 17). Jim revealed a lack of confidence in his reading ability feeling that reading was “very hard” for him and that he had difficulty understanding what he was reading when his teacher asked him a question, (items 13 and 15).

Luke. Luke was reading at a first grade level (DRA 10), answering very positively with a smile on his face and a high pitch in his voice that “yes” he was a good reader during the interview process also indicating that he was a “very good reader” when reading aloud in class (item 19). His positive self-concept continued as he believed that he could “almost always” share his ideas in a small group setting (item 17). Luke’s self-concept and confidence as a reader did differ on the survey as he indicated that he was only “an OK reader” (item 9) and that reading is “kind of hard for me [him]” (item 15). He followed his belief that reading was difficult for him as he does not always understand what he reads nor is he always able to answer a question that Ms. White may ask him about his reading (items 7 and 13).

Scott. Scott read at a first grade level (DRA 10) and indicated “yes!” that he was a good reader during his interview because “I be practicing,” adding support to why he believes he is a good reader. His confidence continued as Scott felt that he could read aloud in class as reading was very easy for him, understanding “almost everything” when he reads (items 7, 15, and 19). While in small group he indicated that he always talks about what he has read along with his ideas, sometimes answering the teacher when she asked him a question about reading (items 13 and 17). However, being behind five reading levels, Scott indicated a lack of confidence as he believed he was an “OK reader” and that he was unable to sound out unfamiliar words while reading (items 5 and 9).

TC. TC read at a second grade level (DRA 18), answered very positively, as he smiled and spoke with a positive tone in his voice that “yes” he was a good reader. He was confident that he was a very good reader that reading was very easy for him and that he could talk about his ideas in small reading groups (items 9, 15, and 17). He also felt that he could answer questions when called on by his teacher regarding reading (item 13). While TC indicated that

reading aloud made him feel “GREAT!” (Interview February 18, 2016) on the survey he had conflicting feelings indicating that he was just an “OK reader” (item 19) when reading aloud. His positive self-concept and confidence level began to decline as he indicated that he could only sometimes decode unfamiliar words and was only able to understand some of what he read (items 5 and 7).

Britney. Britney read at a DRA 12, a first grade level. She was aware of the fact that she was not a good reader as she answered “a little” during the interview; Britney stated the following when prompted to say more about herself as a reader, “Because sometimes I have trouble with my homework. I sometimes have trouble with some of the words.” She continued saying that “sometimes I have to ask what the words mean.” Her response of “a little” was supported on the survey when she indicated that she does not understand what she reads when reading silently and that reading was hard for her as she is not able to decode unfamiliar words (items 5, 7, and 15). Her confidence level did change as she indicated that she was a good reader when reading aloud and overall she felt that she was an “OK” reader (items 9 and 19). Britney felt that she was able to understand what she read as she could answer questions posed by her teacher and was able to talk about her reading in a small group setting (items 13 and 17).

Marie. Marie, reading at a DRA 8, answered that she was an “okay reader” (Interview, February 10, 2016). As an “OK reader” she indicated that reading was “kind of hard for me” (items 9 and 15). Marie felt positive about her ability when reading alone as she could understand what she had read and was able to decode some of the unknown words that she came to (items 5 and 7). Her positive self-concept about reading continued when talking about reading aloud as she indicated she was an “OK” reader (item 19). She exhibited a positive self-concept

when she discussed being called on by the teacher and sharing in small group stating that she could answer her teacher and talk about her ideas (items 13 and 17).

At home students looked towards the adults in their lives as affirmation that they were indeed good readers. For example, “She [mom] sees me read,” “Cuz I read to my little brother,” and “My sister says I’m a good reader.” The adults in these students’ lives influenced how they saw and felt about reading; and, their peers had an influence on the below grade-level readers ideas of making mistakes.

Peer influence. The responses during the interviews suggested that it was not just a matter of using skill or strategies that made them good readers but what others said about them as readers. A positive self-concept did not mean that the students did not worry about how their peers thought of them as readers. Britney, Henry, Marie, Luke, and TC, who all considered themselves to be good readers, did not think their friends shared the same opinions. These students all answered “yes” that they were good readers; however, they felt the opposite when they compared themselves to their friends in reading as well when asked if their friends thought they were good readers. Scott and Luke both indicated high self-concept and confidence as readers believing that they read better than their friends however they also indicated a lack of confidence as they worry about what their peers think about their reading. These students felt that they were good readers but still worried about their peers’ opinions of them as readers. The survey and interview data also indicated why these students believed they were good readers and valued reading despite their low DRA scores.

Henry. Henry thought he was a good reader, however Henry did not always feel confident in his friends’ eyes. He believed his friend thought he was an “OK” reader (item 1) and he worried “once in a while” (item 11) about what his friends thought of him as a reader.

Henry felt that he read “a little better than my friends” (item 3), even though he said there were “five kids that are better” than him in reading (Interview, February 18, 2016).

Luke. Even though Luke believed he was a good reader and felt that he read “little better” (item 3) than his friends, he indicated that his friends only thought of him as an “OK reader” (item 1). He said that “everybody” helped him when he got stuck on a word (Interview, February 18, 2016) but he worried about what his friends thought of him as a reader “almost every day” (item 11) .

TC. TC felt he was “a very good reader” (item 9). TC indicated that he did not read “as well as my [his] friends” (item 3); however, he indicated that his friends thought he was “an OK reader” (item 1). TC stated that he liked to read aloud because he can “read . . . to my friends.” When asked if he thought Ms. Sunny thought about him as a reader he responded “it’s hard to say, because I am the last person she calls on . . . [others] are better than me.”

Britney. Britney was well aware that she was not a good reader as indicated through the self-perception portion of the survey, and during her interview. Britney said “a little” when asked if she thought she was a good reader (Interview, February 18, 2016) and when she was asked what her friends thought of her as a reader her response was “a poor reader” (item 1). When Britney compared her reading to her friends she indicated that she did not read “as well as my friends” (item 3). Britney said that she did worry “every day” (item 11) about what her friends thought of her as a reader.

Marie. As a below grade-level reader, Marie answered “a little” when asked if she was a good reader during the interview; however, on the survey she believed that she was a “poor reader” (item 1) when asked about what her friends thought of her as a reader. Marie believed

that she did not read “as well as her friends” (item 3) and worried “every day” about what her friends think of her reading (item 11).

Jim. Jim was reading at a first grade level and did indicate that “yes” he was a good reader during the interview. He believed his friends thought he was a “very good reader” (item 1) and felt that he read “a lot better than his friends” (item 3). Despite the confidence he indicated in himself as a reader, he responded that he worried “every day” (item 11) about what others think of his reading.

Scott. Scott felt that he was a good reader when he answered “yes!” during our interview when he was asked. He felt his friends thought he was a “very good reader” (item 1) and that he read “a lot better” than his friends (item 3). However, he worried about what his friends thought of him as a reader “almost every day” (item 11).

Students valued reading despite being below grade-level readers. The below grade-level readers valued reading despite their low reading levels (Table 5.4). The value of reading portion of the survey indicated that these students valued reading and planned to be readers as adults. Four items, 2 (reading enjoyment), 12 (importance of reading), 14 (time spent reading), and 16 (reading as an adult) pertained to how the students felt and valued reading. Three students, Bianca, Scott, and Henry, believe that people who read a lot are boring (item 8); however these three students scored threes and fours on items 2, 12, 14, and 16. The ten below grade-level readers indicated on the survey that they valued reading despite their low reading ability.

Bianca. Bianca felt that people who read a lot were boring (item 2) yet she believed that knowing how to reading was “very important” (item 12) to do. As a reader, Bianca said she

“sometimes” (item 2) liked to read and thought reading was a “great way to spend time” (item 14). As an adult she believes that she will spend “a lot of my time reading” (item 16).

Henry. Henry believed that people who read a lot were “not very interesting” (item 2); however, when he grows up Henry will spend “a lot of my [his] time reading” (item 16). Henry believed that knowing how to reading was “very important” (item 12) and he thought reading was a “great way to spend time” (item 14).

Table 5.4

Student Value of Reading

Student Name, Grade, & Response										
Value of Reading Item Number	Bianca (2)	Scott (2)	Jim (2)	Luke (2)	Henry (2)	Britney (2)	Stephanie (2)	Marie (2)	TC (3)	Jack (3)
2 (I like to read)	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	4
8 (people who read a lot are interesting)	1	1	3	3	1	4	4	3	4	4
12 (importance of reading)	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4
14 (time spent reading)	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	3	4
16 (time reading as an adult)	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4

Jack. Jack indicated that he liked to read “often” (item 2) and believed that people who read a lot were “very interesting” (item 8). Jack believed that knowing how to read was “very important” (item 12) and felt that reading was a “great way to spend time” (item 14). When Jack grows up he believes that he will spend “a lot of my time reading” (item 16).

Jim. Jim “sometimes” liked to read a book (item 2) and felt that people who read a lot were “interesting” (item 8). He believed that knowing how to read (item 12) was “very important” and that reading was a “great way to spend time” (item 14). When he grows up, Jim indicated that he will spend “a lot” of time reading (item 16).

Luke. Luke felt that reading a book was something he do “sometimes” (item 2) He also believed that knowing how to read was “very important” (item 12) liked to; however, he thought that people who read a lot were “not very interesting” (item 8). Luke thought that reading was “an OK to spend time” (item 14) and as an adult he indicated that he would spend “some” of his time reading (item 16).

Scott. Scott indicated that he “sometimes” (item 2) liked to read a book and felt that people who read a lot were “not very interesting” (item 8). He thought that knowing how to read was “important” (item 12) and was “a great way to spend time” (item 14). When he grows up, Scott felt that he would spend “a lot” of his time reading (item 16).

TC. TC felt that he would “sometimes” (item 2) like to do reading a book. He felt that knowing how to read was “very important” (item 12) and that people who read a lot were “very interesting” (item 8). TC thought reading was an “OK way to spend time” (item 14) and that when he grows up he would spend “some” of his time reading (item 16).

Britney. Britney felt that reading was something she “often” (item 2) liked to do and believed that those who read a lot were “very interesting” (item 8). Britney believed that

knowing how to read was “very important” (item 12) and a “great way to spend time” (item 14). As an adult, Britney thought that she would spend “a lot” of her time reading (item 16).

Marie. As a reader, Marie felt that she “sometimes” (item 2) liked to read a book and that people who do read a lot were “interesting” (item 8). She believed that knowing how to read well was “very important” (item 12) and a “great way” to spend time (item 14). As an adult, Marie thinks that she will spend “a lot” of her time reading (item 16).

Stephanie. Stephanie liked to read books “often” (item 2). She felt that knowing how to read was “important” (item 12) and that people who read a lot were “very interesting” (item 8). Stephanie felt that reading was a “great way” to spend time (item 14). As an adult she indicated that she would spend “a lot of her time reading” (item 16).

Adult influence on below grade-level readers. It is argued that the interactions that these below grade-level readers had with the adults in their lives towards reading shaped their ideas of what makes a good reader and their ideas towards reading. The students expressed that they felt they were good readers simply because adults in their lives had told them so. The fact that these students were practicing reading at home and reading to others were seen as evidence to them that they good readers. The students received positive feedback from parents, relatives, and the adults within the school who had an influence on them similar to what Pressley et al. (2001) claimed as the importance of providing positive adult models such as a teacher. Role models who are supportive, positive and express enthusiasm for learning (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009; Pressley et al., 2001) can influence student motivation and attitudes. Ladson-Billings (2009) found that it is not necessarily the topic being taught in the classroom but how adults listened to students and showed caring for them that mattered the most. It is the support provided to the students throughout their daily experiences at school that helps the students.

Students described themselves as good readers and what made them good readers.

The below grade-level readers described themselves as good readers and indicated what they felt made them good readers. The description of a good reader included the process of sounding out words, reading to others, the act of reading, and having adults or others who believe in them as readers (Table 5.4) as these were all concepts presented to them in class by the adults the students encountered as suggested by Pressley et al. (2001). Henry, Luke, TC, Stephanie, and

Table 5.5

Student Responses as to Why They are Good Readers

Category	Student Comments
Being able to Sound Out/ Decode Words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “sound it out why nobody telling me” (Stephanie) • “I be sounding out the words” (Stephanie) • “Because I figure out the answers sometimes” (Marie) • “I try to sound out the words” (Luke) • “Because I do sound out the words . . .because I can always sound it out . . . when I get to a word I sound it out and I sound it out!” (Henry) • “I like big words, they are kinda hard but since I sound them out I get them right” (TC)
“Reading”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I like to read very much . . . because when you keep reading you get on track you git to read more.” (Stephanie) • “She [mom] sees me read . . .” (Marie) • “Because I read chapter books” (Jack) • “Sometimes I be practicing reading” (Scott) • “Cuz we be readin’ it every day” (Scott) • “Because she [mom] listen to me uh record me while I be reading” (TC) • She [Ms. Sax] let’s me read” (Bianca) • “cuz Ms. White gave me a book to read at home!” (Jim)
Reading to Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I read to my little sister, I read the little books” (Britney) • “I like reading to her [mom]. . . because I’m always reading to her [little sister]” (Stephanie) • “I read books to her” (Bianca) • “Cuz I read to my little brother . . . I read to them [little brother and sister]” (Jim)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Because sometimes they be saying go read Scott” (Scott) • “Because she [mom] like to hear me read . . . because he [male household figure] likes to hear me read” (Jack) • “I can uh read . . . to my friends and they can see how I read” (TC)
Adults Believing in Them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “My sister says I’m a good reader” (Scott) • “Her [mom] know I can do it . . . cuz her [Ms. White] really nice and her believes in us” (Luke) • “Because we read excellent” (Jack)

Marie mentioned during their interviews and through the self-perception portion of the survey (items 5, 7, and 13) that good readers sound out or decode words while reading or they get help sounding out words. Bianca, Jim, Marie, Scott, Jack, Stephanie and TC’s interview responses showed that reading every day and practicing made them good readers. Jack believed that good readers are those who read chapter books. Jim, Bianca, TC, Danny, Stephanie, Jack, and Britney indicated during their interviews that reading to others and receiving validation of that reading makes them good readers. Scott, Luke, and Jack felt having others who believe in them made them good readers

Good readers sound out words. It is argued that by using the skills learned during literacy instruction a false sense of being good readers was held by the students. Students referred to “sounding out” and being able to “figure out the answers” as to what made them good readers. The students never discussed the concept of understanding what they read or thinking about the story as what made them good readers just the skills they used. In spite of their low reading levels the students presented good attitudes and appeared to have the motivation to want to read; which contradicts the research completed by McKenna et al. (1995) around motivation. When addressing motivation, attitudes, and self-efficacy in reading, one would expect that below grade-level readers would possess negative attitudes towards reading (McKenna et al., 1995), not

positive. The fact that the students in this study maintained good attitudes towards reading despite their low reading levels, speaks to the influence that adults can have, both positive as in their family members supporting their reading at home and negative in the lack classroom instruction that left them with only low level reading skills such as decoding.

Both the below grade-level readers and the teachers considered sounding out words to be a sign of a good reader. A good reader is someone who is able to decode or sound words out while reading as described by Henry, Luke, TC, Stephanie, and Marie. Marie said that she “figure[s] out the answers sometimes” referring to why she was a good reader. Henry used the phrase “sounding out” the most during his interviews, six times. When interviewed, Stephanie said “sounding out” three times, and Luke, Scott, and TC all used the phrase once in their interviews. Ms. White, who taught the second/third grade split mentioned “sounding out” in her interview three different times when referring to the common struggles of her below-grade level readers, the components of good reading instruction, as well as when talking about her students and what they need to be successful in reading.

Henry explained his being a good reader “because I do sound out words.” During a classroom observation on March 11, 2016, Henry was partner reading with Jack. During the exchange between the two boys, Henry began to stumble over the word boil. He turned to me and asked me for help, “What is this word?” I replied by helping him break the word down and within the first two sounds, Henry had decoded the word. With my response, I too indicated that a good reader uses sounding out as a strategy to read. I asked Henry if he believed Ms. White thought of him as a good reader, Henry said “yes, because I can always sound it (words) out” (Interview, February 18, 2016). When asked about what she felt were important components of reading instruction, Ms. White, “being able to sound out words, learn how to blend, knowing

how to stretch, knowing basic strategies” (Interview, May 19, 2016). Ms. White continued, “Reading is all about the letters, the sounds, stretching out those sounds” (Interview, May 19, 2016). Teaching students the letters, sounds, and decoding is just one aspect of reading; reading instruction should incorporate phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, most importantly, comprehension (Cunningham et al., 2006).

Henry said that his mom sometimes thinks he is a good reader because, “when I get to a word I have to sound it out” (Interview, February 18, 2016). He added that his dad thinks he is a good reader “cuz when I get to a word I sound it out and I sound it out!” (Interview, February 18, 2016). Luke also described reading as decoding. He too said he was a good reader, “cuz I try to sound out the words” (Interview, February 18, 2016). Stephanie and Marie, who are both in Ms. Sax’s room, also related reading to decoding. Stephanie stated she was a good reader because “I be sounding out the words” (Interview, February 10, 2016). Stephanie included how she is helping her little sister to learn to read, “I’m trying to get her to know her ABC’s so she will know how to read!” (Interview, February 10, 2016). TC stated that he was a good reader “because I . . . like the big words, they are kinda hard but since I sound them out I get them right” (Interview, February 18, 2016).

“Reading” makes me a good reader. Reading, practicing reading, wanting to read, and reading chapter books were the methods of reading that students spoke about when discussing what made them a good reader. Literature suggests that daily reading practice is important is students’ reading goals (Cunningham, 2006; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011). Scott, Jack, Jim, Bianca, Marie, Stephanie, and TC associated being a good reader to practicing reading or actually liking to read. Scott said “yes” when questioned about if he thought he was a good reader and clarified stating that, “sometimes I be practicing reading” (Interview, February 10,

2016). When asked how often he practices he said, “twenty minutes.” Scott answered “yes” when asked if his teacher, thought he was a good reader and supported his answer by stating, “cuz we be readin’ it every day” (Interview, February 10, 2016).

Jack explained his being a good reader “because I read chapter books” (Interview, February 18, 2016). Jack seemed to portray a positive attitude and desire for reading. When Jack was working with Ms. White in a small group reading a story from the student anthology he said “awe!” with sadness in his voice to Ms. White when she stated “Okay, that’s enough for now” (Video recording, March 17, 2016). Jack exhibited the desire and intrinsic motivation to read (Guthrie et al., 2012).

Jim clarified why he was a good reader, “cuz Ms. White gave me a book to read at home!” (Interview, February 18, 2016). Bianca stated that Ms. Sax thought she was a good reader “because she lets me read” (Interview, February 10, 2016). Marie, also in Ms. Sax’s room believed that her mom thought of her as a good reader “because she sees me read” (Interview, February 10, 2016). TC stated that his mom thinks of him as a good reader “Because she [mom] listen to me uh record me while I be reading” (Interview, February 18, 2016). Stephanie said that “I like to read very much. And because I got lots of books at home” also adding “because when you keep reading you get on track you git to read more” (Interview, February 10, 2016). These students were aware that they needed to practice reading and that by completing extra reading it could help them achieve higher reading goals (Cunningham, 2006; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011).

Reading to others means I’m a good reader. The below-grade-level readers felt that a good reader reads to others. Jim, Bianca, TC, Danny, Stephanie, Jack and Britney connected being a good reader to reading to parents, siblings, teachers, and relatives. While Stephanie, Britney, and TC provided examples of reading to others during the school day; Jim Bianca,

Danny, and Jack connected being a good reader to reading to others outside of the school day. Stephanie and Britney provided examples to support reading to others during the school day as well as outside of school. Students believed that when others asked them to read, that meant that they were good readers. “Cuz I read a book to my little brother” (Interview, February 18, 2016) was Jim’s explanation as to why his mom and dad thought he was a good reader. He also believed his little brother thought he was a good reader because “I read to them [his little brother and sister]” (Interview, February 18, 2016). Bianca responded that her mom thought of her a good reader because, “I read books to her” (Interview, February 10, 2016). Jack was asked about whether his mom and her boyfriend thought he was a good reader, he replied, “Yes because she likes to hear me read . . . [and] he likes to hear me read” (Interview, February 18, 2016). TC thought that good reading was reading to others. When asked about reading aloud in class he told me that he felt “great” about it adding that he could read to his friends and “they could see how I [he] read [s]” (Interview, February 18, 2016).

Scott said that his mom thought he was a good reader as well as his aunt and uncle. He supported his answer, “because sometime they be saying go read Scott” (Interview, February 10, 2016). “I read to my little sister” was Britney’s explanation for why her mom thought she was good reader (Interview, February 18, 2016). I asked her to tell me more about reading to her sister, she replied “I read little books” (Interview, February 18, 2016).

Stephanie nodded her head “yes” indicating that her mom thought she was a good reader, adding “because I be reading to her a lot” and “I be saying big words that she didn’t know I could say” (February 10, 2016). “I know one thing that why she think I’m a good reader. It’s because I’m always reading to her like I say come here do you like this book and I start reading it again and she kept sayin’ read it again!” (Interview, February 10, 2016). While Danny, Bianca,

and TC felt that their families believed there were good readers because they ask them to read, Stephanie, Jim, and Britney indicated that they were good readers because they read to their little brothers and sisters.

Adults believe in me, tell me I'm good, and encourage me so I'm a good reader. At home students looked towards the adults in their lives as affirmation that they were indeed good readers. For example, "Because I'm always reading to her [little sister]," "Because she [mom] like to hear me read," and "Her believe is us." The adults in these students' lives influenced how they saw and felt about reading; and, their peers had an influence on the below grade-level readers ideas of making mistakes.

Students believed that when adults, such as parents, relatives, and teachers encouraged them to read or told them that they were good readers then in fact they were good readers. Scott, Luke, Jim, and Jack mentioned that there were adults in their lives that believed in them as readers so they must be good readers either individually or during class. When talking about his family, Scott said, "My sister says I am a good reader." Jim stated that Ms. White thought he was a good reader because he said she told the class "we read excellent." Luke mentioned his teacher, Ms. White, as being the adult that believed in him and his class as readers, "cuz her really nice and her believes in us." During Ms. White's interview I asked her what motivated her students to read and she responded with, "Praise for when they get it . . . you go 'you can do it!' It's praise." Jack, who is also in Ms. White's room said that she believed in him, "because we read excellent" when asked if she thought he was a good reader.

Connections between classroom instruction and favorite ways to read. In spite of the lack of best practices for reading instruction, the children expressed insights about reading that reflected how instruction was being done in their classrooms. When asked about their favorite

methods of reading the students made connections between what they heard and saw being done in the classroom to their experiences as readers. These findings similar to what Usher and Pajares (2008) argued, namely that students depend upon and look up to not only their teachers but to all the adults in their lives for direction as they are unsure of their own abilities at their young ages. For example, Ms. White frequently told the students that the ability to sound words out would make them good readers. Students expressed that they liked to partner/buddy read because their friends would help them sound out the words. The students associated sounding words out as a strategy that made them good readers. Modeling best practices in reading may have helped these students to develop quality reading practices leading to higher reading levels. The students expressed affective and cognitive ways they thought about reading (Table 5.6). Britney, Henry, Marie, Scott, Stephanie, and TC conveyed cognitive reasoning when discussing reading; for example, choosing to read quietly to help with concentration or participating in whole class reading to hear to the book aloud aiding in comprehension. Bianca, Jack, Jim, Luke, and Stephanie articulated affective reasoning when they discussed reading; the main response being “it is fun.”

Students felt positive about reading except when asked about reading aloud to their peers. Two students, Jim and TC, were the only participants who provided positive, affective responses and reasoning when asked about reading aloud in class. A few of the negative responses provided included, “scared,” “nervous,” and “bad.” Even with the majority of the responses being negative (seven out of the ten), the reasoning behind the responses were important as they describe how the students felt about reading aloud. Despite the negative or positive responses, the reasoning behind those responses were more affective in nature than cognitive. Bianca, Britney, Jack, Jim, Luke, Scott, Stephanie, and TC all provided affective reasons to support their

positive or negative responses, while Henry, Marie, and Britney provided cognitive reasons to the negative responses. Britney provided both a cognitive and affective reason to support her negative response to reading aloud.

Table 5.6

Affective and Cognitive Responses

Affective Responses	Cognitive Responses
Silent Reading	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In my head.” It [reading] helps to calm me down.” (Jack) • “By myself . . . it is fun.” (Stephanie) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Alone, cuz I can concentrate more.” (Henry) • “You can like get the hang of it faster . . .” (Stephanie)
Partner/Buddy Reading	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Partner reading . . . cuz I like it. It is fun.” (Jim) • “Read with somebody . . . cuz it’s fun.” (Luke) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Partner read, cuz they help me.” (Marie) • “With a friend, cuz they tell me if I don’t know the word.” (Scott)
Whole Class/Shared Reading/ Popcorn	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “She picks people. I like to read.” (Bianca) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Whole class. So I will get to hear the book.” (Britney) • “Popcorn, they [classmates] can show you where [you are].” (TC)
Reading Aloud	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Sad. [I don’t like making mistakes]” (Britney) • “Bad and scared. I don’t like reading in front of people.” (Bianca) • “Shy and nervous. I don’t like reading in front of people.” (Jack) • “Happy. It’s fun.” (Jim) • “Shy. I don’t know.” (Luke) • “Nervous, because um I think they [classmates] are gonna make fun of me.” (Scott) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[Sad.] I don’t like making mistakes . . .” (Britney) • “[Nervous], because I mess up.” (Henry) • “[Little bitty scared.] Sometimes I get it wrong.” (Marie) • “[Sad] . . . cuz I can’t read that good.” (Britney) •

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Sad, because Michael got to read and I din’t” (Stephanie) • “GREAT! They [friends] can see how I read.” (TC) 	
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As the below grade-level readers discussed many methods of reading, the commonality being how the method benefited the student and his/her success. The methods of reading that were discussed were silent reading, partner/buddy reading, whole class/shared/popcorn reading, and reading aloud. The benefits of reading as provided by the students included, “I git to hear the book” and “get the hang of it faster” (Student Interviews, 2016).

Silent reading. Silent reading provided the students with time to decode words at their own pace. They also stated that it was “fun” (Interviews, 2016). These were the ideas expressed by Stephanie, Henry, and Jack. Stephanie said that she enjoyed silent reading “Because it is fun and reading by yourself you can like get the hang of it faster [cognitive]” (Interview, February 10, 2016). She continued, “You can look at the words and sound it out why nobody telling you [cognitive]” (Interview, February, 10, 2016). Henry’s reasoning behind reading silently or “alone” was “cuz I can concentrate more [cognitive]” (Interview, February 18, 2016). Jack stated that his favorite way to read was “in my head” asserting that “it needs to be quiet when I read . . . it helps calm me down [affective]” (Interview, February 18, 2016).

Partner/buddy reading. Partner/Buddy reading provided an opportunity to receive help from peers. Partner reading was a reading method that took place between two students taking turns reading paragraphs or pages from student selected material or from the student anthology. Marie, Scott, Jim and Luke were the four students who expressed that they enjoyed partner/buddy reading the best. Marie’s stated that she liked reading with a partner “because

they [her partner or buddy] help me [cognitive]" (Interview, February 10, 2016). When asked how her partner helps her she replied "reading." Scott said he likes reading with "a friend cuz they tell me if I don't know a word [cognitive]" (Interview, February 10, 2016). Jim said "Partner reading. Cuz I like it [affective]!" (Interview, February 18, 2016). Luke said that he liked to read "with somebody cuz it's fun [affective]" (Interview, February 18, 2016).

Whole class/shared/ popcorn reading. Whole class/shared/popcorn reading provided the students with an opportunity to use their listening skills which enabled them to better understand the text. It also provided an opportunity to read aloud through turn taking. Whole class reading incorporated sharing reading between the teachers and the students. Popcorn reading was led more often by the students than the teacher as students called on each other to read a sentence or paragraph aloud in class. Bianca, who chose shared reading stated, "She [Ms. Sax] picks people. I like to read [affective]" (Interview, February 18, 2016). Britney and TC provided reasoning that was more cognitively based. Britney liked whole class reading, "Because I be having trouble with the hard books . . . I will get to . . . so I will get to hear . . . so I will get to hear the books [cognitive]" (Interview, February 18, 2016). "Popcorn" reading was TC's favorite because "everyone can take turns and if you don't know where we at . . . uh . . . then they can show you where [cognitive]" (Interview, February 18, 2016).

Making mistakes and self-efficacy. Making mistakes while reading was seen as a failure by these students and not as an opportunity to learn. As mistakes were made, the students expressed concern about how their peers saw them as readers, similar to Usher and Pajares (2008) who argued that peers have a strong influence on each other when it comes to academic achievement. The more mistakes made while reading can cause a reader to shut down, lowering self-efficacy, and leaving him/her with no desire to read or become successful. If students are in

learning situations where mistakes are not acknowledged as part of the learning process there is a risk that their self-efficacy as learners will be lowered (Bandura, 1993; Usher & Pajares, 2008) and can change their feelings towards reading (Bandura, 1993). While the students considered themselves good readers, they exhibited a lowered sense of self-efficacy and concerns for their peers' reactions when reading aloud through interview data as well as the data shared in Table 5.1 pertaining to the students' self-efficacy.

Henry. Henry thought he was a good reader, however Henry did not always feel confident in his friends' eyes. He believed his friend thought he was an "OK" reader (item 1) and he worried "once in a while" (item 11) about what his friends thought of him as a reader. Henry felt that he read "a little better than my friends" (item 3), even though he said there were "five kids that are better" than him in reading (Interview, February 18, 2016).

Luke. Even though Luke believed he was a good reader and felt that he read "little better" (item 3) than his friends, he indicated that his friends only thought of him as an "OK reader" (item 1). He said that "everybody" helped him when he got stuck on a word (Interview, February 18, 2016) but he worried about what his friends thought of him as a reader "almost every day" (item 11) .

TC. TC felt he was "a very good reader" (item 9). TC indicated that he did not read "as well as my [his] friends" (item 3); however, he indicated that his friends thought he was "an OK reader" (item 1). TC stated that he liked to read aloud because he can "read . . . to my friends." When asked if he thought Ms. Sunny thought about him as a reader he responded "it's hard to say, because I am the last person she calls on . . . [others] are better than me."

Britney. Britney was well aware that she was not a good reader as indicated through the self-perception portion of the survey, and during her interview. Britney said "a little" when

asked if she thought she was a good reader (Interview, February 18, 2016) and when she was asked what her friends thought of her as a reader her response was “a poor reader” (item 1). When Britney compared her reading to her friends she indicated that she did not read “as well as my friends” (item 3). Britney said that she did worry “every day” (item 11) about what her friends thought of her as a reader.

Marie. As a below grade-level reader, Marie answered “a little” when asked if she was a good reader during the interview; however, on the survey she believed that she was a “poor reader” (item 1) when asked about what her friends thought of her as a reader. Marie believed that she did not read “as well as her friends” (item 3) and worried “every day” about what her friends think of her reading (item 11).

Jim. Jim was reading at a first grade level and did indicate that “yes” he was a good reader during the interview. He believed his friends thought he was a “very good reader” (item 1) and felt that he read “a lot better than his friends” (item 3). Despite the confidence he indicated in himself as a reader, he responded that he worried “every day” (item 11) about what others think of his reading.

Scott. Scott felt that he was a good reader when he answered “yes!” during our interview when he was asked. He felt his friends thought he was a “very good reader” (item 1) and that he read “a lot better” than his friends (item 3). However, he worried about what his friends thought of him as a reader “almost every day” (item 11).

Reading aloud. Reading aloud was not the favored method of reading in these classrooms. Reading aloud was the method of reading that was discussed with the students resulting in negative responses as a result of how the below grade-level students perceived the opinions of their peers.

There were three students (Britney, Henry, and Marie) who provided cognitive reasons as to why they did not like reading aloud in class. Bianca, Britney, Jack, Jim, Luke, Scott, Stephanie, and TC all provided affective reasons regarding reading aloud. The commonality that appeared in the students' responses was how negative they felt about reading aloud in class.

Negative feelings about reading aloud. Within both types of responses (affective and cognitive), only two students (TC and Jim) had positive responses. Negative responses were given when asked about reading aloud by Bianca, Britney, Henry, Jack, Luke, Marie, Scott and Stephanie (Table 5.4). While the responses were mostly negative, eight students provided affective reasons as to why they didn't like reading aloud and three students provided cognitive reasons. Britney provided both a cognitive and an affective reason as to why she was "sad" when she had to read aloud.

Britney, one of two students who used "sad" to describe how she would feel if she had to read aloud in class, supported her answer with "I don't like to make mistakes [cognitive]" (Interview, February 18, 2016). She added that she "can't read that good [cognitive]" (Interview, February 18, 2016). Stephanie also used "sad" to describe how she would feel if she had to read aloud during class. She explained further that she never gets to read aloud during class because even though she raises her hand, Ms. Sax tells her no but then allows Michael to read (Interview, February 10, 2016). Stephanie said, "It makes me feel sad because Michael got to read but I didn't and he asked. When I tried to aks her can I read she said no and go sit down and I raised my hand [affective]" (Interview, February 10, 2016).

Scott said that he would be "nervous" to read aloud during class, "because um I think they [classmates] gonna make fun of me [affective]" (Interview, February 10, 2016). During classroom observations, Scott never raised his hand to participate. During one observation, when

Ms. White called on him, his response was so soft-spoken that Ms. White said, “I can’t hear you” (Video recording, April 28, 2016). It took her three attempts to get Scott to speak loud enough for everyone to hear (Field notes, April 28, 2016).

Henry also stated that he would be “nervous” when reading aloud as he doesn’t like to “mess up [cognitive]” (Interview, February 18, 2016). Luke stated that he would be shy but was unable to explain why with his response of “I don’t know” (Interview, February 18, 2016). Jack said he would be “shy and nervous” when asked about reading aloud in front of the class because he doesn’t “like to read in front of people [affective]” (Interview, February 18, 2016).

Bianca said that she would feel “bad” and then “it makes me scared” to read aloud in front of the class because “I don’t like reading in front of people [affective],” adding, “some people don’t like me [affective]” (Interview, February 18, 2016). Bianca exhibited in the past that she is very unsure of herself, especially when reading in small reading groups. She would speak very softly to the point where I would consistently have to ask her to raise her voice. Bianca never raised her hand to answer a question during classroom observations. The only time she interacted with the class was when Ms. Sax called on her directly (Field notes, March and April, 2016).

In-depth personal perspectives were provided by the students through their responses regarding their views about reading. The students provided more cognitive responses when asked about their favorite way to read in class but more affective reasoning when asked about reading aloud in front of the class. When reading does take place in class, the students know how they want to read and why. The responses during the interviews suggested that it was not just a matter of using skill or strategies that made them good readers but what others said about them as readers. A positive self-concept did not mean that the students did not worry about how

their peers thought of them as readers. Britney, Henry, Marie, Luke, and TC, who all considered themselves to be good readers, did not think their friends shared the same opinions. These students all answered “yes” that they were good readers; however, they felt the opposite when they compared themselves to their friends in reading as well when asked if their friends thought they were good readers. Scott and Luke both indicated high self-concept and confidence as readers believing that they read better than their friends however they also indicated a lack of confidence as they worry about what their peers think about their reading. These students felt that they were good readers but still worried about their peers’ opinions of them as readers. The survey and interview data also indicated why these students believed they were good readers and valued reading despite their low DRA scores.

Chapter 6: Lack of Administrative Support for Below Grade-Level Readers and Their Teachers

This study did not set out to examine the school-wide supports for effective reading achievement; however, through the interviews conducted the data revealed that administration did not support the teachers in ways to impact reading achievement including the following: (a) assignment of teachers who lack professional preparation for teaching reading, (b) a lack of communication and collaboration, and (c) an instructional schedule coupled with the lack of resources did not allow for teaching reading effectively. If the assigned teachers in the primary grades possessed specific course-work in reading, had more teacher collaboration time, and were provided with an instructional schedule that allowed more time for reading instruction there would be the potential for them to be able to support their below grade-level readers. This was not the case in this study.

A Lack of Professional Preparation and Development for Teaching Reading

The placement of teachers in the primary grades who did not possess specific coursework in reading instruction beyond the minimum requirement was detrimental to providing quality reading instruction. It is essential that teachers placed in primary grades possess experience in teaching the core components of reading and have deep understandings of these constructs (Pressley et al., 2001). While the teachers involved in this study all possessed the minimum of two reading courses to obtain their K-5 inclusive certification; the teachers lacked additional coursework and professional development in reading instruction. The teachers in the classrooms included a one first year teacher with no experience at her assigned grade level nor with the

demands of an urban setting and two experienced teachers, neither of whom had professional preparation for teaching reading. Teachers without prior knowledge in teaching the essential components of reading placed in primary grades would certainly be overwhelmed. For example, Ms. White stated that she was spending “eight hours a week on lesson planning” and that she was “working so hard to stay on the boat with the pacing guide.” The placement of teachers in primary grades who possessed more experience and knowledge in teaching reading would have increased the potential for improved achievement of the below grade-level readers.

Ongoing professional development. There was no ongoing professional development or building support in the area of reading strategies and instruction in the building. The teachers were left to utilize their own prior experiences in teaching reading and to purchasing online resources that are not always of the highest quality. The teachers viewed the absence of professional development as a lack of support, both within their classroom and outside of their classroom in reading instruction. Two years prior to the study, Ms. White and Ms. Sunny participated in professional development in guided reading, close reading strategies, and Response to Intervention (RtI). The professional development was provided in three half-day sessions the two weeks prior to start of the new school year. Ms. Sax did not participate as she was not on staff at that time. During this professional development, each teacher was provided with a Guided Reading Manual. This manual included strategies to use during guided reading, examples of how to track students’ progress during reading, a lesson plan guide, center-based activity ideas for the students not working with the teacher, reading mini-lesson ideas, as well as a complete listing of the books available in the leveled library. However, there was no professional development given in the area of reading during the year of the study. Ms. White discussed the absence of continuing professional development in reading during our interview.

She said, “We get it at the beginning of the year and its great but throughout the year [she abruptly stopped raising her hand in the air].” Her gesture may have been an indication of frustration for the lack of professional development and support from the administration.

When Ms. Sax discussed attempting to use guided reading in her room, she expressed the need for professional development and needing help getting guided reading started.

Having a course on how to get it [guided reading] started. Because I have stuff like Jan Richardson as that was what was used back home. Nobody here knows who Jan Richardson is. It’s not like reading is going on in the classroom even though we have been told that guided reading has to be done in the classroom, but we don’t even have a sense of what that is. Guided reading isn’t being done. I asked what guided reading looked like in the classroom and nobody knew so I kinda got confused.

The lack of professional development within the school was a concern for all three teachers. Having knowledgeable teachers working with below grade-level readers as well as higher readers is essential to the academic growth of the students as research (Pressley et al., 2001) suggests.

Lack of Communication and Collaboration

There was no evidence of any ongoing communication and/or coordination between the classroom teachers and the RtI interventionists. Providing time for both to plan and collaborate on instruction would have been beneficial to all involved. The collaboration not only needs to be across all of the grade levels but also within the grade levels as was evidenced in the beat the odds schools (Adler 2002a, 2002b; Adler & Fisher, 2002; Fisher & Adler, 1999) to be successful. One teacher mentioned that she did not know what took place during RtI

interventions. While teachers had tried to adjust the instruction to provide additional support within their classrooms, they both indicated that more was needed. Ms. White continued discussing her below grade-level readers and the struggle she felt within the school,

They [below grade-level readers] don't have the support. They don't have the one-on-one, me as an educator, many times I feel that I let them down because I can't. It's impossible for me to do one-on-one, it's just impossible . . . if they are struggling they show out, the behavior, you know the behavior. When the academics isn't there the behavior! Or they put their heads down and go to sleep. They give up, their confidence is gone (Interview, May 19, 2016).

Conversations moved from support inside the classroom to the support provided outside the classroom through the RtI program at Parkside. Ms. White stated that, "Yes that's the help they need" (Interview, February, 10, 2016). Ms. Sunny stated, "My struggling readers receive RtI daily if the interventionist isn't pulled for testing or other duties around the building" (Interview, February, 2016). Ms. Sax expressed a concern when she focused on the RtI program. She said,

I feel like Ms. Thomas [RtI Interventionist] does it [guided reading], maybe she does but I don't know because I have never seen what Ms. Thomas does. And I know that she works with them. And I'm not questioning what she does, I just don't know. Maybe she does do guided reading with them.

When the RtI interventionists and the classroom teachers support and build on each other's instruction the students benefit as determined by Morrow and Gambrell (2011). Communication enables the sharing of skills and strategies taught and reinforces a sense of consistency between

the classroom and RtI interventions. The communication across grade levels, within grade levels, and between the interventionists would provide the staff with clear expectations of student achievement, a chance to share effective classroom reading strategies, and a shared responsibility for the below grade-level readers (Adler, 2002a, 2002b; Adler & Fisher, 2001; Fisher & Adler, 1999).

Ms. White indicated that she felt she was not reaching her students when asked if she felt she had made a positive impact on the below grade-level readers, she stated, “I feel like I am just not reaching them [struggling readers]” (Interview, May 19, 2016). When asked, “If someone came to you and said, Ms. White, what could I do to help you with your below grade-level readers, what would that be?” Her response was very emotional; her voice became low and calm,

Help me find different resources to get them [below grade-level readers] you know, influenced. To help get them from one level to another. I’m working so hard to stay on the boat with the pacing guide and Harcourt is five days and some of them are so far behind that they are drifting off to sea. I’m spending over eight hours a week on lesson planning. And then I have to grade all of their papers, paras can’t grade papers. And if you think about all the subjects I have to teach and then you [administration] want me to come up with pacing guides! (Interview, May 19, 2016).

To clarify her concern she was asked, “Who is supposed to be helping you with all of this?” (Interview, May 19, 2016). Ms. White replied, “The instructional coach. Right now I have to do it on my own” (Interview, May 19, 2016). Ms. White did not elaborate on the discussion around the instructional coach.

The teachers felt that they were not receiving assistance from the support systems within the school including administration or the RtI team. Parkside had an RtI team that consisted of two reading interventionists that served kindergarten through fifth grade who were certified teachers. The school employed an Instructional Coach to serve the building. The Instructional Coach was to act as a coach and guide the teachers in their areas of weakness. However, the Instructional Coach had no specific background in reading instruction; she was previously employed as a secondary English teacher and was certified in English and Speech. Research (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011) states that when a coach is present in a building, he/she is there not as an evaluator of teacher performance but to provide professional development meant to ultimately increase student achievement to the teaching staff.

Instructional Schedule and Lack of Resources did not Support Best Practices

The scheduling for teaching during the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block (Appendix H), which was discussed in chapter four, was likely detrimental to providing quality reading instruction as it did not allow time for the students to settle down after arrival prior to beginning instruction. A solid, uninterrupted block for literacy learning is important for student learning as well (Daniels & Bizar, 2005; Pressley et al., 2001; Snow et al., 1998). Schedules that allow for in-class time for teaching reading was also found to be a critical component for successful reading instruction in research of “beat the odds” schools (Adler 2002a, 2002b; Adler & Fisher, 2002; Fisher & Adler, 1999). At Parkside, instruction was interrupted at the start of day due to the need for this extra community building time. Providing time for the students to arrive, communicate with their teachers, and get themselves settled would allow the students to prepare for their day.

In addition to the schedule that did not support best practices, there was also a lack of resources and reading materials. The unavailability of current materials for teaching reading were also a likely source that was detrimental to providing quality reading instruction. Administration did not provide teachers or students with current resources in reading for instructional or enjoyment purposes, such as equipment for listening centers, high-interest low-level readers, informational texts, and web access for online resources. The listening centers would allow students to hear fluent reading while being exposed to high quality literature as Pressley et al. (2001) argue. In addition, Morrow and Gambrell (2011) have shown that the high-interest low-level texts help the struggling readers build confidence along with motivation. Informational texts at a variety of levels would help teachers connect to the Common Core Standards in reading, and online resources where students can listen to text and answering comprehension questions help to build fluency and comprehension (Roskos & Neuman, 2014).

The teachers wanted interesting reading material for their students in their classroom libraries, but also resources to help them teach guided reading within their classrooms. Ms. White talked about her students as a whole and said, “They need things that they can relate to . . . help me find resources to get them influenced” (Interview, May 19, 2016). Ms. Sax also focused on the lack of resources for teaching reading as well as guided reading in the classroom. She said,

I need to figure out how to do with what I have but I have a sense of never. I literally imagined like from my private school setting where we had classroom sets of books and how we could do stuff with that (Interview, May 11, 2016).

She continued talking about resources and why reading is important,

I wish we could pull in more outside resources . . . I don't know, maybe we could have written a letter to her [a local author] and sent it to her. I don't know. We watch videos but I don't know. See if we could get people to go read with the kids. Go outside of that-find an author and see if we could spend a whole year, I don't know, maybe building up the hype of why reading is so important. Because reading is important. I didn't do it because in my head I know why reading is so important and I just thought everyone knew why it is, but then they don't and then the kids aren't achieving in other areas because they can't read. That's why, building outside resources, more from the beginning.

(Interview, May 11, 2016)

The lack of resources to help their students was a concern for these teachers. They wanted materials that were relevant to their students. Reading books that the students could relate to and would motivate them to read. The commercial reading program being utilized school-wide was the *Trophies* series from 2003. Not only was this program out-of-date, the administration did not provide the classrooms with the support materials that went with the program. There is an online support site for the reading series provided by the publisher but the school did not pay to provide teachers and students access to the materials. A concern was also expressed for utilizing outside materials to interest the students as well as additional materials to use during guided reading.

While the classrooms had small libraries, administration did not purchase updated books for each classroom to use. Having a classroom library filled with narrative and informational leveled texts would allow students to have choices in their independent reading material which increases motivation as research has determined (Gambrell et al., 2011; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011; Pressley et al., 2001). If the classrooms had larger libraries with a wide selection of reading material, teachers might have been able to provide independent reading time to the

students. There was a library located in the building; however, it had not been updated in recent years, the books were not organized for students to use, and there was not a system in place to check out materials. Quality libraries are an essential component to the success of student reading achievement as stated in Snow et al. (1998). All of these resources could provide a positive experience for the students while supporting the teachers in their instruction.

In conclusion, the lack of administrative support for teaching reading contributed to the low-achievement for the students in this study. As other studies (Adler 2002a, 2002b; Adler & Fisher, 2001; Fisher & Adler, 1999) have found leadership at the building level is an essential component to reading achievement. At Parkside administrative leadership for reading achievement was lacking. The building schedule developed by administration that did not meet the needs of their students or their instruction. The teachers lacked preparation and professional development in reading content and pedagogy. The resources needed to be successful were experienced and knowledgeable teachers, continued professional development, and collaboration in planning and communication as research (Adler 2002a, 2002b; Adler & Fisher, 2001; Fisher & Adler, 1999) has found.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This qualitative study focused on second and third grade students in an urban setting examining the discourse that took place during the English Language Arts (ELA) Reading-Vocabulary time block to explore connections between self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1993; Brophy, 1987; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) of below grade-level readers and their motivations and attitudes towards reading (Gambrell, 1996; Guthrie et al., 2012). The questions that guided the study were (a) What does the classroom discourse during reading instruction look like and does it show evidence of best practices? (b) How do the students perceive themselves as readers? (c) How do the teachers perceive their students as readers? and, (d) What supports are in place for below grade-level readers and their teachers? To understand discourse in the classroom, teacher talk and student talk were observed during the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary time block. In addition to the weekly videotaped classroom observations, student and teacher interview data, and the student Motivation to Read Profile Survey (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling & Mazzoni, 1996) data were collected and analyzed. Analysis of these data resulted in three findings related to reading instruction and below grade-level readers: First, classroom discourse was not the type that would promote literacy development; reading instruction was dominated by low level skills; and, best practices were absent. Second, the teachers low sense of self-efficacy may have contributed to the teachers' perceptions about their below grade-level readers as well as lowered expectation for the readers; the students' perceptions about themselves as readers was influenced by their peers

and the adults in their lives. Third, the lack of administrative support for the below grade-level readers and their teachers, which included professional preparation and development for the teachers, the need for communication, collaboration, and having an instructional schedule along with a lack of resources that did not support best practices. The full analysis of each finding can be found in the previous chapters; however, each is briefly summarized below.

Discourse, Reading Instruction and Best Practices

First, classroom discourse consisted of the Initiation, Response, and Evaluation (I-R-E) structure and was the dominant form of discourse during reading instruction. Instructional practices for reading instruction included the initiation, response, and evaluation (I-R-E), which placed the control of the classroom with the teachers. The use of I-R-E does not promote higher order thinking skills as the teachers control the classroom talk (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). Reading instruction took place in a whole group setting leaving little opportunity for individual students to participate in talk around the text. Participation in small groups permits dyadic conversations to occur permitting the power of the conversation to be equally distributed to all the participants allowing for more learning to take place (Cazden, 1986; Candela, 1999; Fisher & Larkin, 2008; Goldenberg, 1995; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991; Nystrand 2006). The students were not able to discuss their thoughts, feelings, or make connections to the literature with their classmates. Dyadic discourse serves to promote comprehension (Nystrand, 2006). Restricting reading and learning to whole group instruction limited the social process, which then limited the construction of knowledge as suggested by Jaramillo (1996). Guided reading is an instructional method that would have permitted the social interactions needed for the students to learn and grow as readers. Ms. Sax expressed that she knew that she should be doing guided reading, also possessing the understanding that guided reading was important to the success of her students.

There was also a concern that students would not be able to handle small groups with center-based activities. Learning how to run small groups may have been lacking in their professional development and the teachers may have been concerned about classroom management during small group instruction. Despite the leveled library that was accessible to the teachers, they chose to solely use the student anthology which did not provide the students an opportunity to for a choice in their reading, which may have also been due to their lack of professional preparation on how to use leveled books for teaching reading.

Second, during reading instruction, the main focus of the teachers was teaching the students to define vocabulary words. Instructional methods used to teach vocabulary were conducted at the basic level of recall (Bloom, 1964) and included worksheets, paper and pencil approaches, along with using words in sentences. The instruction also included teachers providing information, asking questions, giving directions, having students define words, and monitoring seatwork and behaviors. During the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block, instruction included the use of prefixes, suffixes, antonyms, synonyms, nouns, and pronouns. Synonyms and antonyms were often presented along with the vocabulary words from the reading series. Grammar instruction and the use of pronouns and nouns were embedded in the morning “Do Now!” activities. While learning vocabulary is a core component of best practices in teaching reading the emphasis was limited to decoding and providing directions. Other core aspects of best practices were limited and/or missing.

Third, while the teachers were providing instruction they did not utilize and best practices in teaching reading and were often dependent upon the reading series’ teacher’s manual. The teachers indicated that their students needed to comprehend text, make connections to text, learn vocabulary, and have conversations about the text, yet they were not observed providing these

opportunities to their students. Teachers provided direction instruction to the students with the expectation that they should learn simply because they were teaching (Haberman, 1991).

Without guided instruction, the below grade-level readers were not receiving the instruction they needed to help close their gaps and deficiencies in reading (Pressley et al., 2001; Snow et al., 1998). These practices are essential for students such as the children at Parkside as they lacked early experiences with print, which has been shown to be essential for early reading achievement (Pressley et al., 2001; Snow et al., 1998). The teachers depended upon the teacher's manual, which may be due to a lack of professional development in utilizing best practices during reading instruction. As a result of this over-dependence, the teachers provided direct instruction limiting student interaction, teacher talk, and student talk. Dependency on the manual can be taken as an indication that the teachers did not feel comfortable in their own knowledge about the topics they were teaching, which was substantiated by their comments made during the interviews.

Teachers' Perceptions of Readers and Readers' Perception of Themselves

First, while this study did not focus on teacher self-efficacy, data suggest that these teachers possessed a low sense of self-efficacy in teaching reading. The low sense of self-efficacy presented by the teachers in the study may have contributed to their lowered expectations of their below grade-level readers. The teachers differed in their experience in years; however, they expressed concerns about not knowing how to teach reading effectively. Research (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011; Wheatley, 2002) argued that teachers who possess a low sense of self-efficacy may use negative language when speaking about their students. For example, "they don't come to school ready to learn," "they lack the foundational skills," "give up they get frustrated," and "kids aren't achieving in other areas because they can't

read.” Additionally, the teachers spoke of their below grade-level readers as behavior problems who were not able to retain information taught to them (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991).

Second, the teachers in the study taught the below grade-level students with lowered expectations. They used instructional strategies that were at a simple recall level, similar to what Haberman (1991, 2010) described as prevalent in high-poverty urban schools. The teachers presented the students with worksheets, tasks that included copying from the board, and questioning that was teacher directed and focused. They indicated that due to the lack of control in their below grade-level readers they were unable to implement guided reading and center based activities in the classroom. A lack of foundations and poor cognitive skills were also a concern for the below grade-level readers.

Third, the teachers’ lowered expectations were expressed to the students indirectly through the use of the I-R-E pattern of questioning, the non-verbal acknowledgment of student answers, and through the verbal acknowledgement of the student answers as discussed by Gee and Green (1998) and Gumperz (1986). The analysis of the data suggests the below grade-level readers perceived that their teachers did not expect them to learn and do well in reading as they would often provide the students with non-verbal gestures that were negative such as turning their backs on the students or crossing their arms as they responded to a question.

Below Grade-Level Readers’ Perceptions of Themselves

First, the students described what they knew to be good reading as sounding out words, reading to others, and believing in the adults that supported them at school (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011; Pressley et al., 2001) and at home. They stated that they were good readers even though these students were reading below grade-level and the expectations the teachers held were low. It was as if the instruction experienced in their classroom during the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary

block, which mirrored what they described as reading, was what the students understood to be good reading.

Second, the adults in the lives of the below grade-level readers strongly influenced their self-perception as readers. The below grade-level readers expressed why they thought they were good readers, with many of their ideas mirroring the what the adults in their lives told them good readers do. The students were using the simple and basic skills provided to them by their teachers during literacy instruction and therefore thought they were good readers. Students focused on decoding words during reading referring to “sounding out” and being able to “figure out the answers” as to what made them good readers. The students stated that they were good readers because they read at home, to siblings, and to adults. The simple fact that these students were practicing reading at home by reading to others made them good readers. Students listened and trusted in the adults in their lives as these role models told them that they were good readers and they had no reason to believe otherwise as found in Pressley et al. (1991). The students’ reading choices mirrored what they practiced in the classroom. As the students provided their reasoning behind their favorite choice they were reinforcing what they had learned in class from their teachers. The students discussed buddy/partner reading as their favorite because it provided them with help from their partner during reading--again reinforcing that good readers sound out words. The students who indicated that their favorite way to read was whole class/shared/popcorn reading expressed that this method helped them because they could hear the words and that classmates can help with decoding.

Finally, the below grade-level readers perceived their mistakes when reading as failures. When asked about reading aloud in class, the students indicated that they did not like reading aloud. Their reasoning was that they did not like making mistakes and having others hear those

mistakes. The below grade-level readers were concerned about their peers when reading aloud. The idea that their peers might think negatively of their ability was a concern to the below grade-level readers as research (Usher and Pajares, 2008) argues that peers have a strong influence on each other when it comes to academic achievement. When students make mistakes, the “failure” creates a low sense of self-efficacy which can then cause student motivation to decrease as found in Bandura (1977). For example, “I think they [classmates] are gonna make fun of me,” “I don’t like reading in front of people,” and “cuz I can’t read that good.” While the below grade-level readers generally held a positive perception of themselves as readers they were worried about their peers.

Lack of Administrative Support for Below Grade-Level Readers and Their Teachers

First, administration placed teachers who lacked the professional preparation for teaching reading in primary grades. It is essential that teachers placed in primary grades possess experience in teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Pressley et al., 2001). Students in this study began the school year below grade-level, making minimal gains in their reading levels even with the interventions provided through the Response to Intervention program. Students in lower socio-economic areas are more likely to have reading problems therefore it is essential that teachers who serve these populations of readers are extensively prepared in reading (Podhajski et al., 2009; Snow et al., 1998). Furthermore, the school did not provide ongoing professional development in instructional strategies for teaching reading to any of the teachers. Ongoing professional development is essential for both the teachers who are developing and providing literacy instruction but also for the students who are receiving literacy instruction (Cunningham, Zibulsky, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2009; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011; Snow et al., 1998). It is essential that teachers placed in primary grades possess

experience in teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Pressley et al., 2001). It is administration's responsibility to assist in the academic achievement of their student body. With no ongoing professional development in reading, teachers were left to their own prior experiences in teaching and to purchasing online resources that are not always of the highest quality.

Second, administration did not promote communication or coordination between the classroom teachers and the RtI interventionists. Affording time for collaboration would allow the teachers and the interventionists to work together. The team approach would provide a chance for the group to share the responsibility of reading achievement as research (Adler, 2002a, 2002b) states. The RtI team and the classroom teachers worked independently of each other never reinforcing or providing communication regarding the achievement of the below grade-level readers in the classroom. The collaboration time would allow the team to devise a common plan for the below grade-level readers where the teachers and interventionists could support each other's instruction with the end result being higher achieving readers as found in the beat the odds schools (Adler, 2002a, 2002b; Adler & Fisher, 2001; Fisher & Adler, 1999).

Third, administration did not provide or purchase current reading materials for the classrooms or for the students to read. Administration did not provide teachers or students with current resources in reading for instructional or enjoyment purposes. The library in the school was stocked with outdated materials lacking in informational texts, high-interest low-level readers, and current fiction material of interest to the students at Parkside. All of these resources could provide a positive experience for the students while supporting the teachers in their instruction.

Finally, teachers expressed a concern regarding the buildings' instructional schedule. The schedule did not provide enough time for the students to arrive and get settled prior to the start of instruction. Instructional time was often interrupted or delayed due to issues ranging from students walking into class late, having to settle behavior disruptions, and answering questions posed by the students. Allowing the students to arrive in their classrooms, have time to talk with their teacher, as well as time to hand in homework may prevent the disruptions and provide more quality instructional time.

Limitations

Limitations in this study include the fact that the children were from a convenience sample rather than a randomized representative sample; however, this was not possible. Also, not observing the children in the study during their RtI instruction and interviewing the RtI interventionist and administration were limitations. There was also an assumption made that reading instruction would take place in the general education classroom, which would be Tier I. However, the students in the study were also in Tiers II and III in RtI, where they were also provided reading instruction. In spite of these limitations, the findings in this study are relevant given the need for quality reading instruction in early elementary classrooms.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study have several implications for future practice in teaching reading to all students and not just the below grade-level students. The implications include increasing requirements for reading courses during teacher preparation programs as well as the fieldwork prior to graduation. There is also a need for professional development at the school level along with continued support of teachers in the essential areas of reading content and pedagogy. The increase in basic courses in reading for future teachers along with professional development and

support will help to provide the key components of reading to be addressed during core instruction.

Findings from this study suggest that if these teachers had taken more reading courses during their undergraduate and graduate studies and received continual professional development in teaching reading their students could have made gains in reading (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001; Joshi et al., 2009; Podhajski et al., 2009; Snow et al., 1998). In addition, having solid understandings of teaching reading, it is hypothesized that the teachers would possess a stronger sense of self-efficacy in literacy instruction and in turn they would be able to provide better literacy instruction (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Unfortunately, the students in this study began the school year below grade-level and made minimal gains in their reading levels even with the interventions provided through RtI. Without the continued support in the classroom, it is difficult for gains to be made (Adler, 2002; Adler & Fisher, 2001; Fountas & Pinnell, 2013).

The teachers in the study possessed the minimum of the two classes required for general education teacher certification (six credit hours) and had no graduate coursework or professional development in reading pedagogy. Without such preparation they did not possess the skills to teach reading at a level that would advance student learning and reading. Children who are below grade-level in reading and living in poverty (Snow et al., 1998) depend on their schools (Ford & Quinn, 2010) and teachers who are knowledgeable in best practices (Podhajski et al., 2009; Robb, 2013; Snow et al., 1998).

Teachers who are placed in early elementary classrooms with below grade-level readers need the requisite certification/endorsement and ongoing professional development to ensure that best practices are being used and student needs are being met. A stronger focus on the

foundational skills coupled with fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary needs to be addressed in the pre-service teaching programs. Reading is an essential part of students' academic careers and can set them up for success as they graduate and continue on to institutions of higher education. Administration needs to be more cognizant of whom they are placing in early elementary classrooms seeking out those individuals that highly qualified and possess additional training in teaching reading.

Principals and teachers should be actively involved in the development of their building's schedule to ensure adequate and appropriate timing of reading instruction. The teachers in the study had to frequently attend to behavior and morning arrival problems instead of adhering to their instructional schedule. It would be beneficial for schools to allow time in the morning for teachers to have with their students to discuss problems and handle morning procedures prior to the beginning of instruction. This would enable the students to focus on the instruction.

Finally, principals, instructional coaches, and curriculum directors need to be aware of the lack of resources to teach reading in urban schools. There needs to be a movement to ensure that all teachers and students in urban areas have the resources that encourage and support reading in classrooms. The support should be there to assist teachers in instructional strategies that promote active student engagement and discussions, up-to-date reading materials at an interest and reading level for all readers in the classrooms, as well as support from a highly -- qualified reading specialist that can provide assistance in the best practices for reading instruction. The support and resources need to be an ongoing focus and not a short-term focus. Administrators should not expect that after short-term support all of their students will be reading at or above grade-level. The support needs to be ongoing as the student population and needs of those students will change from year-to-year. Ideally this could be completed with a partnership

between the district and university. The university could present the professional development in the week before the start of school followed through with monthly meetings with the teachers to discuss implementation and needs.

Recommendations for Future Research

As a teacher-learner I would like to replicate this study using a randomized sample of students and the inclusion of all adults responsible for their literacy development and achievement. Even though the students in this study said they were good readers, there were a few who did not believe that their teachers thought they were good readers, a few believing that their teacher did not understand them as a reader. Could the small group instruction provide an opening for a stronger teacher/student bond to be developed? How would the discourse around reading in these small groups be different than in large group? What are teachers saying to students in these small group settings to promote, influence, and guide their students? How is feedback utilized in small group settings?

In spite of the fact that the students in the study were receiving RtI interventions there was little evidence of their improving in their reading levels. This study would necessitate looking at the requirements for reading specialist and highly-qualified interventionist that work with students coupled with a survey that investigates the professional backgrounds for those placed to work with below grade-level readers. Being present and observing the discourse and interactions between the interventionist and the below grade-level readers would also provide insight as to whether or not the students are receiving consistent instructional strategies in reading instruction. The consistency between what is happening in the classrooms and during reading interventions may have an impact on the progress of the below grade-level readers.

The idea of teacher self-efficacy, student self-efficacy, and student reading achievement is an area that has not been revisited in recent years. A study that focuses on these concepts in an urban setting as well as a suburban setting would provide a wider perspective of both concepts. The results of such study could provide additional support for the need of teacher preparation and professional development.

I was welcomed into a school that knew it served a population of students who were under-achieving and making poor progress towards on-grade level reading achievement. This is striking since it has been over two decades since the work of Haberman (1991) and others (Au & Raphael, 2000; Ford & Quinn, 2010; Hughes et al., 2005; Petscher, 2010). It would appear that little has changed with regards to the “teaching acts that constitute the core functions of urban teaching” (p. 291). Since 1991, different instructional strategies have been accepted as the norm in reading and yet the teachers at Parkside still depended upon the most basic of teaching skills and strategies. This study also provides a look into an underperforming urban school and the students’ reading achievement. This study provides a glance as to the attributes of an underperforming urban school in the area of reading achievement, which found characteristics similar to those in the “Beat the Odds” studies (Adler & Fisher, 2001), such as time, leadership, collaboration, and professional preparation.

Final Thoughts

As I reflect upon this case study, I truly believe that there is more that can be done to help students in urban schools. The students in this study believed that they were good readers based upon what they had been taught during the ELA/Reading-Vocabulary block. The older students that I reflected upon in my introduction thought of themselves as poor readers and were very self-conscious. Having been a teacher in several urban schools with differing student

populations there are a few things that are evident to me: (a) students want to learn and become successful academically, (b) students want to please and do well for the adults in their lives, (c) teachers are frustrated by the lack of support and direction from the administration, and finally (d) the students can read and will progress if they have adults behind them who believe in them as students and as a person.

There is a great deal of work that needs to be done at the school, district, and state level to support the certified educators who teach students reading in urban areas. It was difficult as an observer in the classroom to not stand up and correct and assist these teachers as they struggled in literacy instruction. These students deserve the same opportunities as their peers, regardless of the schools they attend.

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Appendix A
The University of Michigan-Dearborn
Teacher-INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Teachers/Administrators,

You have been asked to participate in a research study between the dates of February 1, 2016 –April 29, 2016. The purpose of this study is to seek information on struggling readers’ perceptions of the expectations that are set for them within the classroom setting.

Your participation in the study will include the following: an interview with follow-up questions if needed, as well as observations of your classroom during your designated reading/literacy time. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose to skip or refuse to answer any questions asked during observations or during the interview process, without affecting your performance evaluation. Your interview responses will be audio-recorded. The observations will be video recorded. The recordings will be erased when research is completed. There is no risk to your participation in this study and you can withdraw at any time. The researcher will not disrupt the order of instructional time at Highland Park Renaissance Academy.

Although you may receive direct benefit from your participation, others may ultimately benefit from the knowledge obtained in this study. As a participant in this research study, the researchers believes that they information produced will improve the quality of communication and instruction to struggling readers during reading/literacy time. All names will be replaced with pseudonyms and there will no direct link back to you or your students. Information collected will be stored on the researcher’s personal laptop and in a locked office.

The principal investigator, Jill Larkins, has received permission from the school leader, to conduct the research study entitled, Student Perceptions of Teacher Expectations in the Literacy Classroom.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this case study, please feel free to contact Jill M. Larkins at jmlarkin@umich.edu or 734-788-1222, or Dr. Martha Adler at maadler@umich.edu.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign your name in the space provided below; you will be given a copy of this consent form for you to keep. If you would like to learn the findings of this study, please email me at (jmlarkin@umich.edu) and I will be happy to forward that information to you.

 Signature

 Date

Please sign below if you are willing to have a one-on-one interview audio-recorded. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

 Signature

 Date

Please sign below if you are willing to have observations video recorded. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the observations video recorded.

 Signature

 Date

Appendix B

The University of Michigan-Dearborn Parent/Guardian INFORMED CONSENT

Title of Project: The Young Reader: Attitudes and Motivation towards Reading

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your permission is being sought to have your child participate in this research project. The study will look at your child's attitude towards reading and how he/she sees him/herself as a reader. I will ask your child some questions about reading in a short interview, and ask him/her to respond to a reading motivation survey. I will also observe your child during reading instruction. With your permission I will audio record our interview and video record the classroom observations. No instructional time will be taken for these activities.

There are no risks for you or your child. This research can benefit your child and others based on what is learned from the study. All information will be kept strictly confidential. Your child's name will be replaced with a pseudonym. There will be no identifying information to link any findings to your child. At no time will any information be released to anyone. The audio recording will be erased when the research is finished.

Your child's participation is voluntary. Your child can drop out of the study at any time without any negative consequences. If at any time before, during, or after the study you have any questions regarding the study or its outcomes, please feel free to contact me, Mrs. Jill Larkins by email at jmlarkin@umich.edu or by phone at 734-788-1222 or Dr. Martha Adler, my dissertation advisor, by email at maadler@umich.edu or by phone at 313-583-6418.

Please sign your name in the space provided below if you agree to allow your child to participate in the study. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your personal records. If you would like to learn the findings of this study, please email me at jmlarkin@umich.edu and I will be happy to forward that information to you.

Thank you for providing consent for your child's participation in this study.

I give permission for _____ (name of child) to participate as described above.

Printed Name

Consenting Signature

Relationship to Child

Date

Appendix C

The University of Michigan-Dearborn

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

My name is Mrs. Larkins. I am doing a research project where I am trying to find out about your experiences in reading, how you feel about yourself as a reader, and how others make you feel about reading. If you agree to participate, I will interview you, ask you to answer survey questions, and observe you in your classroom. I will audio record when we do the interview and video record when I'm observing you in class. This is so I can listen later in case I forget what you said.

Your parent or guardian said it was okay for you to be in the study, but no one else will know that you are in my study. When I write about my research, I will not use your name

You also get to choose if you would like to be a part of this study. It's okay if you do not want to participate. If you say yes now, you can always change your mind later on.

I will give you a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later. When I am done with the research project, if you would like, I will share what I learned with you.

Circle the face that represents what you would like to do.

I do want to participate.

I do not want to participate.

Yes ____ No ____

Yes ____ No ____

Name of Student

Signature of Student

Date

I am willing to have my voice audio-recorded and be video recorded during observations.

Student Signature

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix D

Motivation to Read Profile

Figure 2
Motivation to Read Profile

Reading survey

Name _____ Date _____

Sample 1: I am in _____.

☐ Second grade ☐ Fifth grade
☐ Third grade ☐ Sixth grade
☐ Fourth grade

Sample 2: I am a _____.

☐ boy
☐ girl

1. My friends think I am _____.

☐ a very good reader
☐ a good reader
☐ an OK reader
☐ a poor reader

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.

☐ Never
☐ Not very often
☐ Sometimes
☐ Often

3. I read _____.

☐ not as well as my friends
☐ about the same as my friends
☐ a little better than my friends
☐ a lot better than my friends

4. My best friends think reading is _____.

☐ really fun
☐ fun
☐ OK to do
☐ no fun at all

5. When I come to a word I don't know, I can _____.

☐ almost always figure it out
☐ sometimes figure it out
☐ almost never figure it out
☐ never figure it out

6. I tell my friends about good books I read.

☐ I never do this.
☐ I almost never do this.
☐ I do this some of the time.
☐ I do this a lot.

(continued)

Figure 2
Motivation to Read Profile (cont'd.)

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand _____.
☐ almost everything I read
☐ some of what I read
☐ almost none of what I read
☐ none of what I read
8. People who read a lot are _____.
☐ very interesting
☐ interesting
☐ not very interesting
☐ boring
9. I am _____.
☐ a poor reader
☐ an OK reader
☐ a good reader
☐ a very good reader
10. I think libraries are _____.
☐ a great place to spend time
☐ an interesting place to spend time
☐ an OK place to spend time
☐ a boring place to spend time
11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading _____.
☐ every day
☐ almost every day
☐ once in a while
☐ never
12. Knowing how to read well is _____.
☐ not very important
☐ sort of important
☐ important
☐ very important
13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I _____.
☐ can never think of an answer
☐ have trouble thinking of an answer
☐ sometimes think of an answer
☐ always think of an answer
14. I think reading is _____.
☐ a boring way to spend time
☐ an OK way to spend time
☐ an interesting way to spend time
☐ a great way to spend time

(continued)

Figure 2
Motivation to Read Profile (cont'd.)

15. Reading is _____.
☐ very easy for me
☐ kind of easy for me
☐ kind of hard for me
☐ very hard for me
16. When I grow up I will spend _____.
☐ none of my time reading
☐ very little of my time reading
☐ some of my time reading
☐ a lot of my time reading
17. When I am in a group talking about stories, I _____.
☐ almost never talk about my ideas
☐ sometimes talk about my ideas
☐ almost always talk about my ideas
☐ always talk about my ideas
18. I would like for my teacher to read books out loud to the class _____.
☐ every day
☐ almost every day
☐ once in a while
☐ never
19. When I read out loud I am a _____.
☐ poor reader
☐ OK reader
☐ good reader
☐ very good reader
20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel _____.
☐ very happy
☐ sort of happy
☐ sort of unhappy
☐ unhappy

Figure 6
MRP Reading Survey scoring sheet

Student name _____
 Grade _____ Teacher _____
 Administration date _____

Recoding scale

1 = 4
 2 = 3
 3 = 2
 4 = 1

Self-Concept as a Reader

*recode 1. _____
 3. _____
 *recode 5. _____
 *recode 7. _____
 9. _____
 *recode 11. _____
 13. _____
 *recode 15. _____
 17. _____
 19. _____

Value of Reading

2. _____
 *recode 4. _____
 6. _____
 *recode 8. _____
 *recode 10. _____
 12. _____
 14. _____
 16. _____
 *recode 18. _____
 *recode 20. _____

SC raw score: _____ /40

V raw score: _____ /40

Full survey raw score (Self-Concept & Value): _____ /80

Percentage scores

Self-Concept

Value

Full Survey

Comments: _____

Appendix E

Teacher Interview Questions

Thank you for participating in this interview. As you know, I'm going to audio record this so I can be sure to have an accurate record of your responses. Also, you have the right to refuse to answer any questions if you feel that something is too personal. And, you have the right to end this interview at any time. There are no consequences to you if you choose not to answer a question or decide to stop the interview. Any information you share with me will not be shared with the administration within the building.

- Do you have any questions before we get started?
- Do you have your class list and your students reading levels?
- Do you agree to be audio-recorded during this interview?
- Ready?

Teacher # _____

1. Let's talk about your students and reading....

- How many students do you have reading above grade-level?
- How many are reading below grade level?
- Is there anything you'd like to share about reading regarding any of your below grade level or struggling students?

2. Do all of your students learn the same way?

- Are there any differences in learning between your high level readers and your struggling readers?

3. Tell me more about the struggling readers.....
4. What kinds of supports do your struggling readers receive either inside the classroom or outside?
5. What do you think is the common struggle of your below grade-level readers?
6. What do you believe motivates your students to read?
7. Tell me about some of the successful readers in your classroom.....
8. What is one thing you'd like to change regarding reading instruction or the reading process in your classroom?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding your students or reading?

Thank you so much for participating! I appreciate your responses and all that you do on a daily basis to help your students. If I have any follow-up questions, would it be alright for me to follow-up with an email?

Appendix F

Case Study on Reading Student Interview

Thank you for helping me with this interview. I want to talk to you today about reading, will that be alright? I'm going to audio record this so I can be sure to have an accurate record of your responses. If you don't feel comfortable answering a question, we can skip it and move on to the next. At any point you can tell me you'd like to stop the interview. There are no consequences to you if you choose not to answer a question or decide to stop the interview. Any information you share with me will not be shared with your teacher.

- Do you have any questions before we get started?
- Is it okay for me to record this interview?
- Ready?

Grade level: _____ **Student #** _____

1. So tell me about your classroom.....do you read during the day?

2. Can you tell me about the different ways your teacher has you read during the day? (Looking for buddy reading, silent reading, "popcorn" reading, reading aloud)

- Which one is your favorite? ----Why?

3. How does it make you feel when your teacher has you read out-loud in front of the class?

- Why do you feel that way?

4. Do you think you are a good reader?

- Why or why not? Tell me more.....

5. Does your mom think of you as a good reader? Why?

- How about dad? Why?
- How about your brother or sister? Why?

6. Do you think Ms. _____ thinks of you as a good reader?

- Do you think she sees you differently than other students in the class?

7. Who helps you the most with your reading if you are stuck on a word, sentence, or just don't understand? (Looking to uncover a link between questions 5 & 6 and who helps the student...)

- At home?
- At school?

8. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about learning to read or reading?

Thank you so much for helping me today.

Appendix G
MASS Observation Protocol

Mapping of location of students in room:

Date: _____

Grade & Classroom: 2nd a 2nd b 3rd a

Absent Students:

M (material-actors, place, time)	A (specific reading activity)	S (Semiotic aspect- language, gestures, symbols)	S (Sociocultural- feelings present during interaction)

Appendix H

K-5th Grade Class Schedule

K-5th Grade Class Schedule

Time	8:15-9:15	9:20-10:20	10:25-10:35	10:40-11:10	11:15-11:25	11:30-12:30	12:35-1:00	1:05-1:45	1:50-2:50	2:55-3:55	3:55-4:00
Grade 2B/3	ELA/Reading-Vocabulary	Math	Transition	Lunch	Transition	Teacher Prep/ Elective	Small Groups RECESS		Social Studies/ Science	ELA/Writing & ELA/language	Transition
Time	8:15-9:15	9:20-10:20	10:25-11:15		11:20-11:50	11:55-12:25	12:30-1:10	1:15-2:15	2:20-3:20	3:25-3:55	3:55-4:00
Grade 3	ELA/Reading-Vocabulary	Math	ELA/Writing & ELA/language		Lunch	RECESS Collab w/2-3 team	Small Groups	Social Studies/ Science	Teacher Prep/ Elective	Tech Time	Transition
Time	8:15-9:15	9:20-10:20	10:25-11:20		11:20-11:50	11:55-12:25	12:30-1:10	1:15-2:15	2:20-3:20	3:25-3:55	3:55-4:00
Grade 4	ELA/Reading-Vocabulary	Math	Teacher Prep/ Elective		Lunch	RECESS	Small Groups	ELA/Writing & ELA/language	Social Studies/ Science	Tech Time	Transition
Time	8:15-9:15	9:20-10:20	10:25-11:20		11:20-11:50	11:55-12:25	12:30-1:10	1:15-2:15	2:20-3:20	3:25-3:55	3:55-4:00
Grade 4-5	ELA/Reading-Vocabulary	Math	Teacher Prep/ Elective		Lunch	RECESS	Small Groups	ELA/Writing & ELA/language	Social Studies/ Science	Tech Time	Transition
Time	8:15-9:15	9:20-10:10	10:25-11:20		11:20-11:50	11:55-12:25	12:30-1:10	1:15-2:15	2:20-3:20	3:25-3:55	3:55-4:00
Grade 5	ELA/Read-Vocabulary	Math	Teacher Prep/ Elective		Lunch	RECESS	Small Groups	ELA/Writing & ELA/language	Social Studies/ Science	Tech Time	Transition